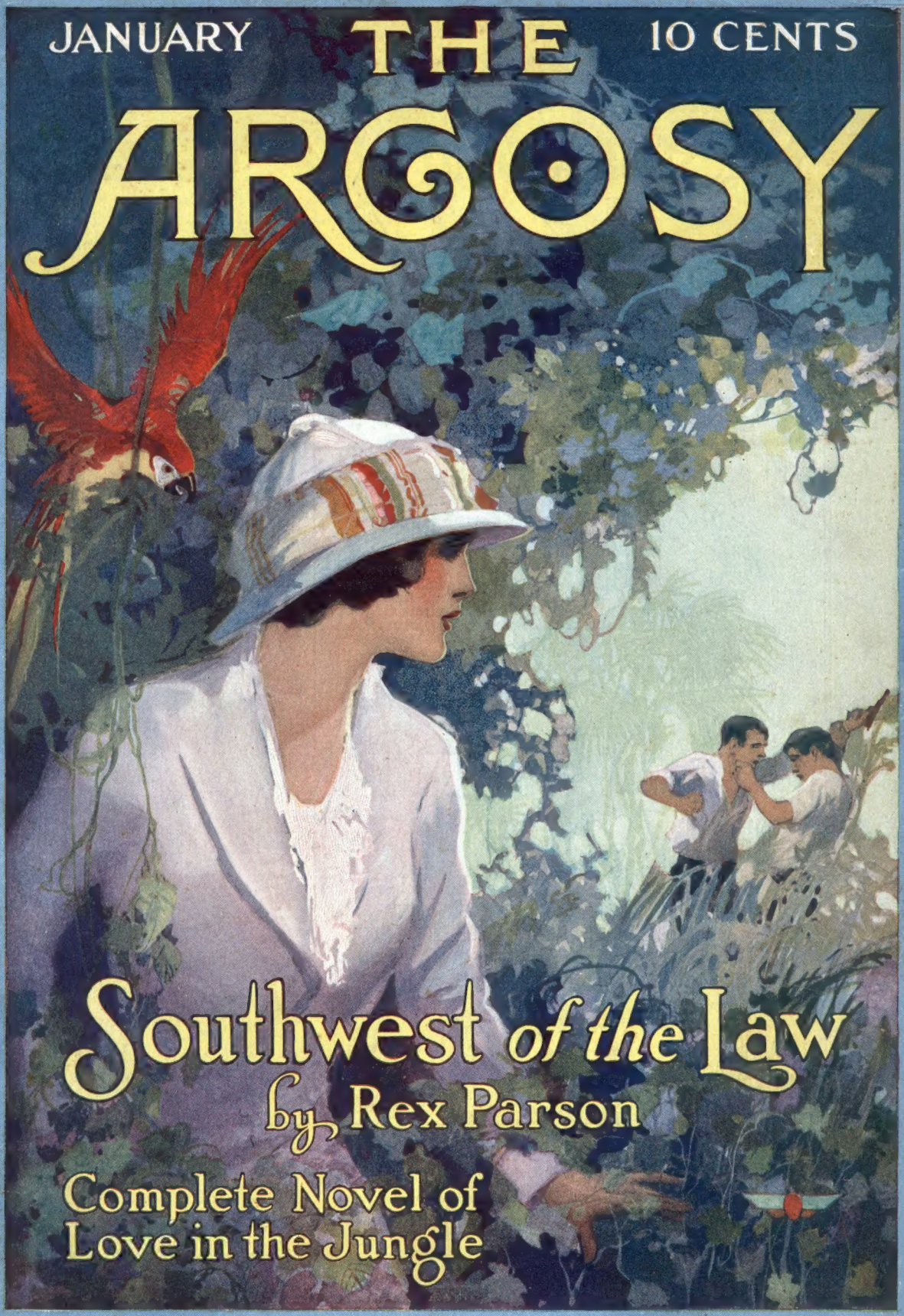
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The picture will appear as a five-reel feature film and is to run serially over a period of about five weeks in this popular fiction weekly.

The opening chapters of the story will begin in the issue dated Saturday, December 16.

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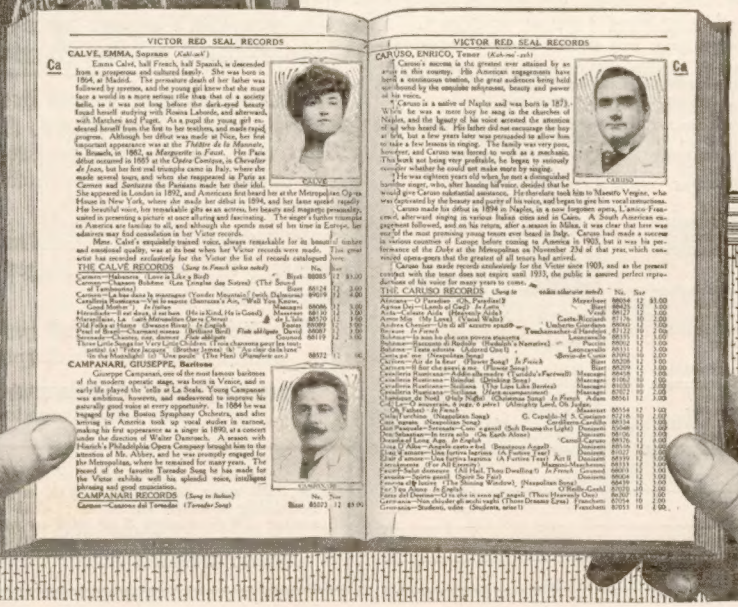

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THE ARGOSY

CONTENTS FOR JANUARY, 1917

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ONE COMPLETE NOVEL

SOUTHWEST OF THE LAW.....REX PARSON 193
CHAPTERS I–XIX

ONE TWO-PART STORY

SIDE-TRACKED AT GREEN GAP. Part I.....MARIE B. SCHRADER 261
CHAPTERS I–VI

THREE SERIAL STORIES

THE GILDED TRAP. Part II.....GEORGE M. A. CAIN 284
CHAPTERS VII–XI (with Synopsis)
DARING THE DANGER ZONE. Part III.....NORCROSS FORBES 310
CHAPTERS VIII–XII (with Synopsis)
THE MOTIVE. Part IV.....LAWRENCE PERRY 331
CHAPTERS XIV–XVII (with Synopsis)

SEVEN SHORT STORIES

JUST FOR THAT.....LEIGH GORDON GILTNER 252
LADIES DON'T COUNT.....RAYMOND S. SPEARS 276
SOME DOG.....WILLIAM ALFRED COREY 305
AND SHE TOOK ME IN.....MAUD SPRINGER NESOM 327
REELS AND REALITIES.....NELL FREEMAN 349
FIVE DREADFUL NIGHTS.....JOHN BLUNT 351
CLIPPING THE VAMPIRE'S CLAWS.....JOSEPH IVERS LAWRENCE 359
THE LOG-BOOK.....THE EDITOR 364

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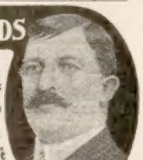

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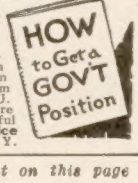

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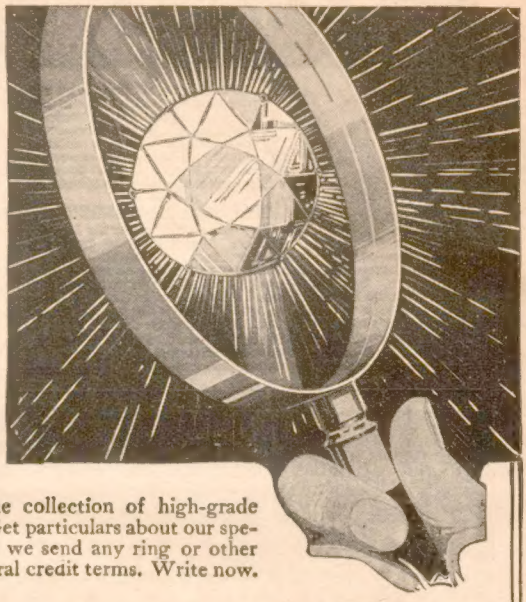

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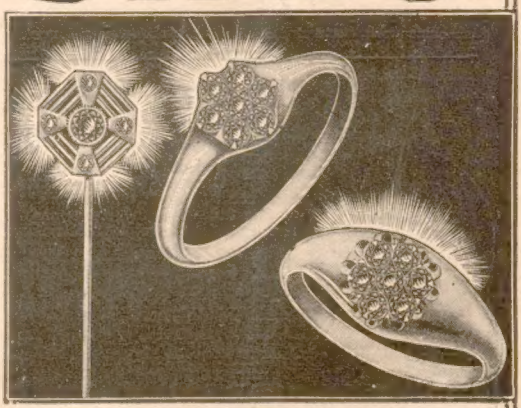

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THE ARGOSY

Vol. LXXXIV JANUARY, 1917 No. 2

Southwest of the Law

by Rex Parson

COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.

CHAPTER I.

BEATEN.

"TWO days—and failure!"

Bob Phillips half sat, half lay sprawled over a sort of divan settee, in what might have been a comfortable position if his head had not been raised from the inclined back, as if his anxious, worried eyes sought something in the darkness.

His gaze was fixed upon a long valley and a view most men would have considered beautiful if they had not seen too much of it. Five or six miles of broad river formed the floor of a vast aisle between tall fringes of livid green under a dome of dazzling blue set with stars so bright they glared.

But Phillips saw nothing of the view. He was staring at the end of a dream. It had been quite a dream while it lasted.

There had been a good deal of dreaming before his encounter with Alf Netcomb—a longing to get out of the humdrum of laboratory and class-room work, to turn his knowledge of engineering and languages into something more concrete than lectures to students, to go forth as one of the modern type of fortune-seekers who hunt with vast engines, huge girders, mighty mills, factories, dams, bridges, make the wildernesses blossom with smokestacks—and get the fortunes.

Netcomb had helped him through his hard-earned university training by paying liberally for coaching that enabled Netcomb to keep up with his classes. The

real dream had come four months since, in a letter from Netcomb.

Two evenings before that they had met for the first time in the year and a half since their mutually assisted graduation. Netcomb had paid for a dinner. The letter was the outcome of the dinner.

DEAR OLD GRINDY PHILLIPS:

Our talk last night has set me thinking and doing. It strikes me we can use you in our business. I didn't know you had gone in for languages to the extent you have, or that you would be interested in any work so tremendously active as what we talked about.

You know, I was telling you about the new scheme we have for manufacturing the crude rubber ourselves, right on the ground. I think I mentioned our man, Haggins, who seems to be making a good start at this game. I didn't dare say any more until I could have a talk with the governor.

Anyhow, here's the proposition: We'll pay you eight thousand a year to go down into the Brazilian rubber country and help Haggins hammer efficiency into the rubber-gathering industry. As soon as you can get your line of action from Haggins, you're to establish a similar plant to the one he has already afoot. You can stay and boss that at ten thousand a year just as long as you want to—you see, I'm taking your ability for granted. Anybody that could shove me through old Sheff can get rubber out of the Selvas.

If you're interested, come over Wednesday morning and talk business. Until then, consider me, as ever,

Very much yours,

ALFRED P. NETCOMB,
B/WW/APN. Vice-President.

The letter-head at the top of this epistle was that of one of the biggest automobile-tire manufacturing companies in the world.

If it hadn't said Wednesday so positively, Phillips would have been at the rich young man's office an hour after the letter reached him Tuesday morning. Now, as he sat and batted at the insects that wouldn't let him sleep, he was glad he had had that Tuesday. Its dreams had provided the sum total of the joy he had got to date out of his new job.

Oh, those lovely dreams! In them he had seen himself as he had hoped to be some two years hence—hardly less than a little king in a small industrial empire, with subjects fresh redeemed from savagery and tremendously grateful to their liege-lord who had done the redeeming for them.

In these visions he had faced hostile natives and triumphed over them. In them he had hunted wild beasts and berugged a palatial bungalow-home with their splendid pelts. In those dreams he had been a personage in black-faced capitals.

A lot of things had been happening to the dreams since then. The first bit to go was chipped off before he started from New York. It had rather capped the climax before it went. It had been the enthronement of a queen in the aforementioned bungalow-palace.

Not that there was the slightest likelihood of Laura Langtree wanting to be a queen of a tropical tribe in a bungalow palace. Not that Laura had been essentially the only possible queen for him. She had seemed only to embody his ideals of a vaguely conceived Mrs. Phillips a little better than any other of the young women he knew but slightly anyhow. She had missed the chance by announcing her engagement to another while he was preparing for his start.

Now any queen was out of the picture. It was absurd to dream of bringing a white woman of decent breeding to this insect-ridden jungle.

A lot of other things had faded. The adventure of the thing had deteriorated into about what most adventures are for the man who has them—a lot of infernal annoyances and a constant feeling of insecurity.

He had seen no big game. The wild Indians were not hostile to anything but work, water, soap, and clothes. So far as he could observe, the chief danger from them was that of having one's stomach upset by the sight of their filthy, naked persons.

And the chief danger from the beasts of the jungle could be overcome with a

properly constructed mosquito-netting—if one could but find one properly constructed.

And yet Phillips was big enough, his dream was big enough, the work going on here was big enough—to endure for it all the petty annoyances. His vision had outlasted these disappointments.

Anyhow, he had kept enough of the vision for two months of residence in the agent's shack here, so that he yet purposed to make the place the scene of his life job. During those two months Haggins, the man who had made the beginnings of a vast rubber plantation and factory, had been training him for the time when he must assume full charge of half the plant.

And now, two days since, Haggins had gone away, not permanently as yet, but upon a short punitive expedition against a remote village of the savage Indians who had revolted against the company's rubber-gatherer and killed him.

Two days—and the dream was gone. And in its place stood failure—his own failure—the growing consciousness that he lacked the ability to properly handle the men.

Yesterday he hadn't believed it, though the let down from the general speed Haggins managed to maintain was wofully apparent. Last night he had lain awake over it; but had refused yet to believe it, though he feared the spoiling of nearly half a ton of rubber gum which should have been safely vulcanized long before dark brought quitting-time.

But to-night he could hardly doubt it. Everything lagged. The men had loafed all day. Quarrels and disputes had arisen. The worst thing that had happened had been the cave-in of a wall under construction, due to the careless shoring on the part of a negro foreman.

For the two months since he had come, Phillips had been resolved that he would not, convinced that he could not exercise discipline with the fairly brutal severity which Haggins practised. He had flattered himself that he had proven in managing unruly boys his capacity for governing firmly, but with due regard to justice and human rights.

And two days had shaken that conceit off its pedestal. In two days of bare fairness he had managed to lose his grip on the men. Could he regain that grip, even if he adopted all of Haggins's rigorous methods?

He shuddered at the thought. While he had chatted with Haggins on the night of his arrival, the manager had suddenly lifted his pistol and fired from the porch into the night. A man had thudded to the ground with a yell of pain. Dr. Pinhon, the native surgeon, had pronounced his wound a shattered calcaneum — the heel-bone.

"Just what I aimed to do," Haggins had commented coldly. "Take him to the carcel."

"But," the doctor had protested mildly, "he really ought to be able to lie down."

"Ought to have thought of that before he broke bounds" snapped Haggins, and led the way back to the porch of the bungalow. And there, in response to an inquiry of the newcomer, Haggins explained his carcel, or prison.

"You'd only make these fellows happy if you locked them up where they could lie down and eat two meals a day. I fixed them. The carcel's cells are four feet square; and the bottom is made of hollow tile cemented end up, and with pieces broken out. It's no holiday.

"Oh, no—of course I've no authority to lock men up. They don't have to go if they don't want to. Four of them didn't since I've been here. I gave them perfectly good checks for their wages.

"These fellows don't know north and south from straight up and down after they've got a hundred yards into the jungle. Between the wild Indians and the snakes and insects — well, one of them came back looking like a ghost a week after he left, and took a month's sentence in the carcel with a whine of gratitude. The others never came back, and their

checks never came back either. We've pretty nearly got them."

That was Haggins's method—a rod of iron with barbs in it. He struck first and inquired afterward if at all. And he got the results.

Phillips had been unable wholly to like Haggins after that night's experience. He himself had resolved upon a very different rule.

And he was failing with it. He had already failed. Nothing in this world is harder to regain than respect, once lost. And this let-down on the men's part—he realized now too late that it might well mean their annihilation as well as his own failure.

To save the plant, to save the organization, to save the property of the company that had given him his job through friendship, perhaps to save the very lives of the peons and himself—there remained only one thing to do: He must despatch some one with a message to Haggins to come back immediately.

And that message would be the confession of failure. After that he could go back to civilization, to some silly school, to a little job that was nearer his size!

He was on the point of lighting a lamp to begin the composing of the message when his gloomy meditations were interrupted. He sat up, peered into the darkness between him and the river. Surely those were human shapes, one after another, stealthily, swiftly padding along the bank from the stockaded bunk-houses.

That one of Haggins's most strenuous rules which forbade leaving the stockade after work-hours was for their own protection. These vaqueros and, still more, the natives from the cities were helpless as babes and hopelessly lost two hundred yards into the jungle. Besides, it held here as elsewhere, that no quicker way into trouble may be found than by the romance route with the women of the savages.

Hurriedly Phillips went inside and secured his automatic pistol. The men might not go back from so flagrant a violation of discipline without making a riot.

The thought sickened him, not so much for what might be done to him as for what he might have to do to some one else. He was no coward. These men had no weapons save knives; the guns and machetes were kept in his own quarters.

But another thought struck home into his breast, before which the bravest might well quail. Suppose it were an attempt to steal away from the plant! Suppose he were to be left here alone!

CHAPTER II.

FRESH COMPLICATIONS.

PHILLIPS hurried down the bank and almost caught up with the tail-ender of the nocturnal escapade.

"What's this?" he yelled in Portuguese.

The man turned about. He made no apology for his own or the others' violation of the rule.

"See—a launch!" he announced, as if the appearance of a boat were sufficient excuse.

Phillips stared in the direction toward which the man was pointing. His eyes were immediately aided by his ears. Shrill and strident through the jungle stillness sounded the whistle of the approaching vessel.

For an instant he almost forgot his fear and anger with the men in his surprise. The company's boats were all accounted for far elsewhere. Besides, they would have greeted the plant with three long blasts in salute. The launch half a mile down the river had given one long, inquiring toot.

The company was supposed to be solidly recognized by the government. Could it be that the Telegraphic Commission had got some wind of one of Haggins's extra-legal punishments and was coming to bring down the law's majesty upon the punisher? In that case Phillips would

be in oceans of difficulty, entirely ignorant of the necessary steps of the procedure.

But, what else? The very blankness and impossibility of guessing seemed ominous to the man who had lost a good deal of his nerve anyhow.

Then he recalled his duty toward his men.

"What are you doing out here?" he shouted again. "Who told you to come out of the stockade? What do you mean?"

A dozen of them were in earshot. They wheeled about and pointed out the boat.

"Get back!" he ordered in a voice as thunderous as he could make it.

"The boat," they replied. "It wants help."

And then the whistle was blown again. This time it produced a series of short, sharp blasts, a genuine signal of distress.

It occurred to Phillips that the position of the stockade might have made it possible for the men to hear a previous similar signal which would have been shut off from him by the walls of the bungalow. At all events, it would be much easier to commend the men for a perfectly excusable action than to insist on discipline which he might or might not be able to enforce.

"Ah," he said placidly. "Quite right. Get a boat—"

His words were interrupted by the flash of a headlight on the approaching vessel. It struck squarely upon Phillips's pajama-clad figure, then swept the other half-arrayed men on the bank.

A voice called across the intervening water—a woman's voice.

"How's the landing?" it asked in Portuguese.

"All right—come straight on," no less than twenty of the men responded.

There was an instant quickening in the churning of the boat's screw, the noise of its motor's exhaust became audible. The search-light played upon the crude spiles of the landing.

"Have you a doctor?" the woman's voice inquired again as the boat neared the wharf, on which men had already taken their stand to catch any ropes that might be thrown to them.

Had Phillips been half as expert in Portuguese as was the woman, he must have recognized that her accent was foreign to the tongue. He took example of the natives, and himself hurried to the dock.

Some one thought then to turn on the light from the switchboard at the engine-house in which Haggins had installed a dynamo as one of his first acts toward erecting a modern-equipped plant.

"What's the trouble?" he asked.

"My father — bitten by pirayas—bleeding to death. Have you a doctor—quick?"

The woman still spoke Portuguese. The boat crowded awkwardly against the dock in the current, and almost fell away as the engine was thrown out of gear by the turning of the lever on the bridge.

"Go get Dr. Pinhon as quick as you can," Phillips commanded the nearest of the men.

"Here I am," the native physician responded himself, having been drawn apparently by the same curiosity which had brought the rest.

Meanwhile Phillips was noting that the girl had picked up a coil of rope from the forward deck; that she was evidently handling the little boat entirely alone.

His men were quicker than he in noting and acting. Two of them flung themselves aboard the stern and secured a second line.

Dr. Pinhon was by now aboard. The young woman was explaining as rapidly as possible the nature of the wound her father had received from the ferocious little fish which infest the Amazonian waters to make bathing dangerous in many places.

"You are Americans, aren't you?" the native doctor inquired.

"Yes," the girl answered. "Isn't there an American in charge here? We heard—"

"I'm an American," Phillips spoke up with renewed interest and in English.

"Ah," the girl uttered in a tone of relief; "Mr. Haggins?"

Her relief seemed based on information with regard to Haggins. Everywhere the American's ability to organize and control the natives had been commended in Phillips's hearing on his way to the place. Phillips rather wished the note had not been so eager.

"No," he had to admit, "I'm Mr. Phillips—just arrived two months since. Mr. Haggins is off in the jungle. I'm—" he almost hesitated at thought of his own inefficiency—"in charge here."

The girl was unquestionably beautiful, though of the type which many Americans have come to damn with the word "highbrow." She looked, and was, intellectual. She probably had two or three university degrees of her own. Phillips was not surprised when she stated that she and her father were devoting themselves to study of the bird life of the Selvas.

But a girl who could single-handed manage a thirty-five-foot motor-boat was no foolish pedant. And a girl with a face like hers could get away with clothes that looked well adapted to the work and the climate. They had not talked ten minutes before Phillips was warning himself that he mustn't allow the situation to turn him susceptible.

Most of her talking had been done with the Brazilian doctor, in explanation of the means she had employed for keeping her father from bleeding to death, means which had lacked nothing of science, but had failed of complete success for sheer lack of sufficient physical strength on her part.

Dr. Pinhon, a thoroughly competent young surgeon, nodded approval of the methods. But he could hardly give encouragement to the hope the girl expressed for speedy getting away toward civilization. And Phillips found himself fighting a genuine delight at the surgeon's statement that some weeks would be required for regaining the strength the old man had lost with his blood.

He was apparently much older than his daughter's looks would have led one to expect — a white-haired, bewrinkled, but probably very sturdy gentleman in ordinary conditions, one of those chaps in whom steely nerve and will indomitable take the place of big muscles and heavy frame. Now he was quite unconscious and very white, not a highly satisfactory protection for a girl otherwise alone in a tropical jungle.

And yet this girl seemed amply able to take care of herself. Phillips would not have been willing, on strength of his present acquaintance, to trust his sister with Dr. Pinhon alone. He knew nothing against the young surgeon save his race, which was mixed Indian and Portuguese. He did not know whether that mixture were against a man or not.

But the girl had made up her mind about him in two minutes. And, somehow, Phillips knew that the girl was right.

"It will not be necessary for any one else to stay up with my father," she said, in a final tone which would be hard to contradict. "Dr. Pinhon and I will look after him."

The doctor had decided that it would be unsafe to remove Dr. Reade, as his daughter had introduced him, from the berth in the boat. The old man had been severely wounded in the side, slightly above the hip, where it was difficult to stop the flow of blood by bandaging, and impossible to keep it stopped and move the patient.

But Phillips, back in his "residence," was long in going to sleep. He told himself that he was merely interested in the strange phenomenon of a mere slip of a girl who fearlessly tracked the jungle rivers with a physically feeble old man and such a native helper as might be secured whenever one incumbent changed his fickle mind about staying with the job.

Gone, at least for the moment, was his will to confess failure by sending for

Haggins. Somehow, he felt that he could not leave now. He could never own to a girl who met the jungle conditions that he could not meet them.

Just why he should contemplate having to confess any weakness in this respect might not be so apparent. Miss Reade would be gone by the end of a month. There would be no boat for him to leave with before that time anyhow. There would be no reason for her knowing whether he stayed on or went after she had departed.

And yet, foolish as it seemed, he did not care to consider her as passing out of his life. He wanted to know her better; he wanted her to know him and to regard him as worth knowing.

Well, he would be worth knowing. He would get the upper hand of the natives under him, and in a fashion entirely superior to the brutal methods Haggins employed. He would—

Suddenly he leaped to his feet from his cot. Barely stopping to draw on the high slippers beside it, he rushed from the place.

A shot had been fired on the boat. Pell-mell he ran toward it. He almost stumbled over the form of a half-naked man who uttered a groan of pain, but hastily crawled aside and seemed to be making for the stockade.

At the same instant the flash of the boat's search-light was turned full upon him.

"There he is, Mr. Phillips," the girl cried, shifting the light enough to catch the crawling figure. "I hope it isn't one of your men—from all I've heard they 're rather too well organized for anything of the sort."

But it *was* one of the company's men. As Phillips caught the fellow and lifted him to a sitting posture, he beheld the face of the foreman whose work had caved in the afternoon before, and whom Phillips knew by the name of Julio.

"It's a mistake—a mistake," the man whined fearfully. "The *senhora* thought I would steal. I wished only to make sure the men had properly secured the boat."

"He did not answer when I spoke to him, but ran," Miss Reade calmly offered what might well be taken as proof of guilty purpose in his presence at the dock. As if the man understood her words, he voiced a response to them:

"I was sore embarrassed that the lady should see me thus—I wished only to get away," he explained in his patois Portuguese, indicating his half-clad person.

The girl laughed. Obviously the explanation did not satisfy her at all.

"I think I hit him in the heel. I aimed to." She spoke with utter indifference to the excuse Julio had just uttered.

Dr. Pinhon came up from the task of tightening the bandages on the old naturalist's wound. He walked hurriedly up the dock to the spot where Phillips still gripped the refractory foreman by the shoulder.

"Where'd she hit you?" the surgeon asked gruffly.

The man showed the calf of his leg, from which blood trickled in two spots where a very small bullet had passed through.

"Pah!" grunted the physician. "I'll fix that up in a couple of days so that you can take the long trail all right."

Plainly this frightened the would-be thief more than the hurt. He whined again his excuse; his eyes rolled pleadingly toward Phillips's face.

"*Senhor*—no—it is mistake—*senhor* is merciful—*senhor* will surely pardon. *Senhor*—"

"Take him to the carcel," Phillips ordered the only man who had appeared from the stockade. "I'll attend to him in the morning."

And yet he was planning to rescind that order even as he listened to Miss Reade telling of hearing movements on the deck while she was helping with the dressing of her father's wound, of hurrying up as soon as the doctor could spare her, of demanding the fellow's business while she covered him with her little rifle,

of receiving no reply, of Julio's attempt at flight.

Well enough he knew what Haggins would do under the circumstances. Haggins would hardly give time for the dressing of the slight wound before he drove the man from the works at the point of the pistol.

But—that would be terrible punishment. Three hundred miles of jungle lay between them and the nearest real settlement. Of the scattered rubber-men on the way, Julio would receive scant courtesy or aid. Julio might well be frightened at the possible perils in a country where he could hardly walk three hundred yards without getting lost.

No, Phillips could not do it. The fellow's excuse was pretty flimsy, but not wholly beyond all plausibleness. He had not been caught in the act of taking anything; he had nothing on his person from the little yacht.

And the carcel—it was no place for a wounded man. Phillips had Julio taken to the residence and locked in an empty store-room.

Yet once again he felt that the girl was right. Unless Julio were severely punished, to-morrow night would begin wholesale pilfering. He simply could not administer the punishment, however. His inborn sense of justice and humanity revolted at the idea of inflicting anything that could be called a real hurt unless he were absolutely sure that it was deserved.

He dreaded the morrow and the other morrows. He was now only the gloomier that he should have met under such circumstances a woman whom he very much desired to impress favorably.

CHAPTER III.

THE LAW THREE HUNDRED MILES AWAY.

IT was one of the marks of Haggins's real genius that the hours of labor at the plant were as nearly suited as could be to the conditions of the country and the people he had to deal with. The morning began at sun-up and continued until nearly eleven o'clock, from which time the men were free until after three. This avoided the extreme heat of the midday and met the peculiar national spasmodic temperament which tends to feverish work for short periods.

A messenger despatched to the visiting boat returned with word that the doctor and Miss Reade had their patient well in hand and would not require at all to interfere with the business of the manager.

Phillips would have been glad to endure a little interference. Half a dozen men who didn't look it, complained of fever and refused to work, taking advantage of the fact that the doctor would not immediately inspect them, and that Haggins was not there to punish when the results of Dr. Pinhon's examination should belie their excuse.

Even under Haggins the men worked best when they knew he was watching them; but now their work lagged everywhere. Only one small gang made any ordinary showing—the one in which a new foreman had to take the place of the imprisoned Julio.

It was not until the morning work-hours were finished that Phillips got to the motor-boat in person. The visit was a fresh revelation. Last night the cabin had seemed a bit in confusion, after the girl's desperate single-handed run of a hundred miles with her helpless father. It had hardly appeared ship-shape, and had fallen short of any resemblance to a well-ordered room in a house.

Now it was both. That absolute orderliness which is all but essential to water-craft blended with the comfort of a tiny sitting-room. Guns, microscopes, glasses, and the taxidermist's outfit which had cluttered the place the evening before, had now disappeared.

It seemed to Phillips that the white curtains must have been fresh laundered. The upholstery had been carefully straightened out. The table, extended and covered with an immaculate cloth, was just set for breakfast.

Miss Reade emerged from the galley just forward of the little saloon, Phillips's hail having been answered merely with an invitation to "come on in."

She was no longer the khaki-clad single-handed crew of a boat. She was now the dainty little housekeeper. Her fresh, white linen yachting costume was only enhanced by the white apron which covered it. Her cuffs were turned back above the elbows, and the velvet white of her arm was a revelation not afforded by her sun-browned and briar-scratched hands and face.

Phillips barely saved himself from a gasp of open admiration. That he showed more feeling than their very brief acquaintance warranted was painfully evidenced by the startled pause with which she interrupted the words she was speaking as she came from the tiny cookery.

"We had just about given you up. Dr. Pinhon and I were going to have our breakfast without you, while we were sure father is asleep. I had thought you'd come over, and would be glad to taste a bit of home cooking, even if it is a meal of monkey-meat, palm-tops, and yams. You've arrived just in time."

"If it's half as tasty as everything looks in here"—Phillips's eyes were still so fixed upon the girl's face that the words at least took her in—"I'm sure it's going to make me sick."

"Why—I beg your pardon?" she bit upon his little catch.

"Homesick," he explained with a laugh. "I haven't seen anything so homey since I left the States."

She smiled at his jest; but her face became almost drawn at the rest of his words.

"It's a horrible makeshift," she said earnestly. "I do what I can with it. But—we ran foul of a sunken log two months ago and stove a hole through the bottom. We barely beached the boat in time to save things from getting entirely ruined. Fortunately there was a rubber-man's empty little one-room shack there; and we had to move into it for two weeks before we could get the repair made. And I shed real salt tears when we were ready to leave again. That place was the first home I've ever had."

"You don't mean to say you've always lived on a boat?" Phillips asked in astonishment.

"Oh, no—we've lived in hotels, and trains, and ships, and even hotel apartments. Our work, you know, keeps us moving. Father says he's going to settle down when we get back from this trip. But he won't. Just as soon as he's written this book, he'll want to start for something new. Being an authority on jungle birds isn't all it's cracked up to be."

The wistfulness in her tone worked dangerously on Phillips's heart. But, before he could waste much sympathy, she had changed it. There was an eager, girlishly enthusiastic curiosity about her which was more fascinating than anything feminine which had hitherto crossed Phillips's path.

"But I want you to tell me about this plant. I've been longing to see it ever since I first heard of its starting—a year ago, wasn't it? Just as soon as it's safe to leave father I'm going to see all of it.

"This is the sort of thing I call worth while. Just think of starting a city that will be like Manaos, for instance, in a few years! You should be bigger than Manaos. Your plant here will tap a bigger area. And you'll be sending rubber-men farther and farther south and west. That means civilization."

Phillips smiled. He thought of some of the rubber-men who had come into the plant since he had arrived.

"Do you think the rubber-men do much civilizing?" he asked.

"They settle down here and raise families a good bit more civilized than the savages," she argued.

"But their inhuman cruelties in so many cases," he protested.

And the girl laughed at him.

"I'm afraid we North Americans can't talk much about that. Our pious forefathers usually traded with the Indians

and skinned them until they started a rebellion, then killed them off and took their land."

Phillips became aware, by her smile over his shoulder, that Dr. Pinhon had come in from the after cabin. She instantly turned to her fluent Portuguese and explained some of their argument.

"I got the last of it," Pinhon said. "I can speak a little English."

"I was just saying that the rubber-men aren't any worse than our ancestors in their treatment of the savage Indians. I think the Portuguese all through, however barbarously they may have treated the Indians, were—"

"Inhumanly," Pinhon put in with the zest of a Brazilian whose grandfather and two uncles had fought to establish independence from Portuguese rule.

"But a little less so than our forefathers. You yourself are a civilized native, the result of Portuguese settlement. The result of English settlement is a civilized English community with the natives all dead. As for the cruel rubber-men, a lot is to be said for the difficulty of getting natives to do anything anyhow. One has to be pretty hard on them."

Pinhon clapped his hands in applause of the praise of his people. The defense of the rubber-men rather shocked Phillips. He wondered if this girl could approve of Haggins's methods — if she herself could practise such methods. It hurt him to question about it.

As they sat down to the meal the talk drifted to lighter matters. Phillips was at a disadvantage. He spoke Portuguese so much better than Pinhon spoke English that the use of the latter tongue would have been rude to the doctor. But conversation was difficult enough for him so as to keep him rather out of it, a listener rather than one of the talkers.

And he studied the girl. Her animated, sparkling eyes were wonderful, after a practically sleepless night. Her manners were so utterly those of a New York society woman with the frivolity left out, her smile was so responsive, her whole make-up so seemingly gentle—was it possible that she could view calmly the disciplinary methods that Haggins employed?

Did science leave one so lovely with a heart cold to individual suffering and possible injustice and interested only in some vague future benefit to a race? Or, did all people who dealt with the savages become utterly callous in their treatment of them?

Suddenly the dinner and his questioning was interrupted. There was a wild shouting from the stockade, oaths, shrieks, yells. The gate of the place was flung open as Phillips reached the deck of the boat.

Down toward him rushed one of the cameradas, his face a mass of blood, staggering, tottering, collapsing before he had come fifty yards.

After him dashed another, a machete waving in his hands. He, too, was staggering, though he showed no wound. He was mad with drink.

Hastily Phillips drew his revolver as he ran to meet the mescal-crazed man. His heart was sinking even as he ran. Not in the entire two months under Haggins had such an outbreak as this occurred. Mescal was prohibited under penalty of the "long hike."

The sight of the pistol's muzzle halted the man with the knife, as well as the shouting, howling, helpless pursuers behind. As usual with drunken men whose intoxication has led them through high excitement, he came to his senses with a snap.

"He tried to kill me!" he shouted in a transparent semblance of genuine indignation. "He tried to kill me!"

"Drop the machete!" Phillips commanded in a tone that menaced. "Drop it!" he snapped more sharply as the fellow hesitated.

The machete clattered to the ground.

"Hold him," Phillips then ordered the others. "To the carcel with him! Now, we'll find out about this.

"Juao," he addressed the nearest na-

tive whose name he could call, "who began this fight?"

The answer was a shrug of the shoulders, a voluble protest that Juao had not seen the fight at all, until he heard the shouts of the victim, whose name, it appeared, was Pedro.

Impatiently Phillips turned to another. He got the same confession of ignorance. Manifestly the men would not tell—from the gaits and actions of many of them it was clear that they feared getting into trouble over the mescal in the stockade.

"You're under arrest," Phillips told the fellow who had been in the aggressive at his own first vision of the affair.

He was exercising the authority of every man to arrest a felon caught in the act. He felt that he was carrying out the very best and only legitimate method of dispensing punitive justice.

Dr. Pinhon looked up from the unconscious victim to whom he had hastily directed his attention. He threw up both hands in a gesture of disgust his respect for Phillips's position could not restrain.

"*Todos Santos!*" he exclaimed, "must we all go to Manaos for this drunken quarrel?"

"Well, what would you?" Phillips asked in a tone of despair, as the difficulties of getting his prisoner and witnesses to the nearest court were thus presented to his mind.

"Nothing, *senhor,*" replied the doctor, recollecting himself and regaining his natural politeness.

"But—really, what would you do?" Phillips insisted.

"Senhor Haggins would have shot the man down as he ran. Defense of the other, you know. That would have been punishment enough. Now—" Again there was the eloquent gesture of near despair at the prospect before them.

"But I didn't need to shoot him. I stopped him without," Phillips protested. "The law is for the purpose of punishing such men."

"The law! Three hundred miles away! Oh, *bueno!*" He turned back to his patient. Phillips summoned enough of his waning authority to gain a somewhat reluctant obedience to his order—

"Back to the stockade, all of you. I'll find out where this mescal came from, and who's been drinking it."

CHAPTER IV.

ARMING THE ENEMY.

PHILLIPS returned to his bungalow. He had lost his appetite for the tasty dinner on the little cruiser.

As he had sat in the cozy cabin and talked with the splendid woman who made of such quarters a veritable little home, as he had heard her tell of weeping for the one-room shack of a rubber-man—there had been a renewed flash of the best of the old dream.

Oh, no—he was sure he had not so quickly and suddenly fallen in love. But—she was the ideal queen for the bungalow palace that was to be.

Her wonderful capacity, her fearlessness, her ability to make the most of jungle conditions or any others, her brilliant mind, her finely modeled, intelligent face, her—

And the dream had been rudely broken off. Now the men he was supposed to rule were drinking themselves from the best organized industrial unit in Brazil to a mescal-maddened mob.

And all he could do was to promise to investigate. His experience as a teacher had taught him the foolishness of any attempt to carry out his promise. He would find out nothing from the ready-lying peons. He would but appear a little weaker in their eyes than before.

Haggins's carcel had never been built to take in the entire camp. Just what Phillips could do to punish them all was more or less a mystery. But something must be done about it.

He decided to call for the "chief" of Haggins's little police organization. Hardly had he rung for his serving-man to send after Senhor Alessandro Mellao when

the chief's lieutenant appeared of his own volition.

"*Senhor*"—he spoke, with alarm in his voice—"*El Senhor Capitan*—has disappeared. He has taken with him two of the best men of the force. As his lieutenant, I beg to inquire if I shall send out three more men in search for the captain, or shall reserve all the men to quell the disorders in the stockade?"

Phillips felt as if the last hope was fading. Haggins's police captain was a remarkably capable man, had been taken from an official position in the Brazilian army. Phillips was hardly prepared for desertions of his higher officials.

"How many men have you left?" he asked.

"Twelve, *senhor*," reported the young lieutenant.

"Think you can handle the stockade job?"

"Oh, yes—that is, if *senhor* does not object to the use of the club and bastinado."

The inappreciation of his mercy, the knowledge that he was being rapidly humiliated in the eyes of a person whose respect he very much wished to retain—had worked upon Phillips's patience.

"Give them what they deserve," he snapped hotly.

With an elaborate salute the lieutenant was gone. Phillips stared down the river as he had stared last night. His eyes fixed themselves upon the white outline of the little cruiser tied to the wharf.

The captain of the police a deserter! Was this the beginning of the end? And what would the end be?

At least he must go up now to the stockade and see what he could of the conditions to which things had come, and lend his moral support to the lieutenant.

Something in the thought of that youth's fearlessness brought about the only glimmer of encouragement Phillips could see in the situation. Somehow the look on the chap's face hinted that all discipline might not have departed forever from the plant.

From the stockade, as he approached it, came the sounds of mingled groans and howls and curses. Phillips's fresh courage went stale. He bade the guard open the gate with sickening fear of what he might find inside.

It was a sickening sight which awaited any man who had tender feelings for human suffering. The police had gone about their task of subduing the riot with a will. Their clubs were flying about in bewilderingly reckless blows. Shouts of sheer love of conquest were upon their lips, but were well-nigh drowned by the cries of their victims.

Ten feet from the gate a policeman was clubbing the head of one prone upon the ground. The fellow had already lost consciousness. He no longer writhed under the blows. Phillips feared the man was dead.

"Stop that," he shouted at the policeman. "You don't have to kill him."

It seemed that the young lieutenant had seen and heard. He confronted Phillips in an instant.

"*Senhor*," he snapped hotly, "I take the pleasure of extending my resignation from this force, to take effect immediately. With Mr. Haggins, I am willing to serve. With yourself, I am unable to do so."

His pompously polite curtness was an affront in itself which Haggins would have punished unmercifully. Phillips had acquired at least enough of the regime to resent anything like "talking back" on the part of any native.

"You are prepared to walk home?" he warned sharply.

"I'm no fool peon," the other retorted. "My contract calls for transportation back by company's boat in case of discharge or resignation, and the use of the company's store during any delay in the transportation, too."

"Your resignation is accepted," Phillips returned with dignity. It would never do to take the young officer's impertinence.

But it was a hollow dignity. As was

to be expected, the young officer had not lost all the opportunity the occasion afforded for letting his own subordinates and the peons see and hear his assertion of independence.

Haggins might have carried the fellow to the carcel and hurled him inside bodily, with his wonted disregard for fine points of legal right or contract. But Haggins was not there.

The effect was bound to be further demoralizing. Phillips was utterly at loss to decide on any successor to be chosen from twelve men equally good and equally bad for all he knew. He stayed himself in the stockade, commanding the policemen personally.

His first act was to send for Dr. Pinhon to look after those who had been beaten insensible by the over-zealous officers. The next move was to search through all the shacks for any remaining mescal.

There would have been a third move on Haggins's part. Two, three, half a dozen if need be, would have been lashed to posts and beaten until they told who had brought in the fiery liquor and how.

"*Dios!*" Dr. Pinhon exclaimed with a gasp as he looked about the stockade with its general atmosphere of mob fighting and utter confusion. Then—

"When do you expect Senhor Haggins, Senhor Phillips?" he inquired. He, too, was forgetting his position in his disgust with the management.

Phillips got an inspiration. Too many of the men were hopelessly intoxicated for the accomplishment of any work in the factory. The rest could hardly be trusted to keep out of the way of machinery. The job they hated worst was the clearing of the jungle.

He would drive them to the edge of the cleared land of the company, make them work and sweat off their liquor. Quickly he passed the word to the four or five of the foremen who could still stand and speak. It was, he thought, an ideal bit of the kind of discipline he considered adequate.

Incidentally, it would take the gang two miles out of the sight of Miss Reade. It would prevent any possibility of her seeing them at work in their present state of utter inefficiency.

He hurried back to his bungalow to get his head net. And he met the last person in the world he wished just then to see.

"My father has just awakened. Is Dr. Pinhon anywhere around?" she asked.

"Can you wait two minutes?" Phillips asked in turn. "I'm going right up there and will send him to you as quickly as he can be spared."

"Thank you," she said simply. Then, moved by kindly interest, she added: "It's really a shame to have left you here without any more experience than you've had. I'm surprised that Mr. Haggins should do it."

Once more Phillips was moved by his eternal sense of justice. Whatever he felt against Haggins, the man was not to blame for entrusting the outfit to him, since he was supposed to be capable of taking charge of it.

"It's not his fault at all," Phillips answered. "I'm afraid it's entirely my own."

But, as he hurried back to the stockaded camp, he muttered bitterly to himself—

"*Pity!*" It was about the last sentiment he wanted any one to feel for him. Pity is uncomfortably close kin to contempt.

Pity!—from the most worth-while girl he had ever seen—pity for a man six feet two in his socks and weighted only with solid bone and muscle at two hundred pounds!

Pity! Within two hours he was wondering if he deserved even that.

Except for the dynamiting of roots, the men accomplished the clearing of the jungle with a single tool, which was ax, hook, knife, and sometimes spade or hoe. That tool of universal service was the machete.

As usual for the purposes of clearing, Phillips had opened the tool-house and provided each man with the required im-

plement. Machetes were not allowed in the stockade.

So eager was he to try out his inspiration, a punishment both real and reasonable, that it flashed upon him only when he had handed forth sixty of the big carvers that he had armed sixty drunken half-savages with the battle-weapon they preferred to all others.

"Great Heaven!" he groaned. "I don't deserve pity. What I ought to have is a swift kick."

CHAPTER V.

THE NIGHT OF TERROR.

THERE were three factors in the situation on which some hope might be founded. One was the natives' indolent good nature, the unwillingness to exert himself unnecessarily. Another was his incapacity for any organization save that directed from above. The third and last was the superiority of Phillips's two automatic pistols to the machetes.

None of them seemed very adequate. Good-natured indolence ceases to be good natured when it is driven to work. And the mescal they had drunk would finish any remnant of good nature.

While there was little danger of preconcerted attack, there being scarce wit enough in the drunken crowd to plan anything, it would need but the example of some one of them, a little more drink-emboldened than the rest, a show of too much impudence, the resistance to a command or threat—and the sixty men would be individually moved by a common impulse which would give them the unanimity they might not reach by thought.

Every man would turn upon Phillips and the policemen. The attack would not be organized, but it would be sufficiently dangerous.

And the automatics were good just so long as the men kept enough sanity to be afraid of them. The natives were perfectly capable of a madness which would hurl itself into the face of such weapons, which would not be halted by the fate of one or two or a dozen. And then the automatics would be sufficient at one hundred per cent efficiency to account for exactly twenty of the sixty.

It was with no little relief that he got the whole gang to the edge of the clearing without mishap. The foremen and their smaller groups were as yet at odds, the one commanding, the others obeying with the force of habit. Phillips lost no time in spreading them over nearly a mile of the jungle's edge.

Hardly had he appointed the last group to its task when trouble began. It being the intention to make the vast clearing eventually a cultivated grove of rubber-trees, it was the present plan to leave all such trees undisturbed. One of the half-drunk peons had made the mistake of chopping off a young rubber-tree with a single hack of his machete.

Instantly the foreman was upon him with the bastinado. As instantly the fellow turned upon his superior with the big knife. The battle was on in a second.

During the first moments of Phillips's run for the spot the foreman was getting the better of the fight. Though it seemed that with such weapons any fight must be only a matter of the first blow, the two men appeared to handle the heavy knives with a sort of rude fencing art.

The foreman had lost a piece from the blade of his machete not less than six inches long and two inches deep; but he had managed to hack off two or three fingers from his assailant at the first exchange of blows.

Drink and pain-maddened, the fellow snatched the weapon in his left hand. He appeared equally at home with either hand; but the change threw the foreman into confusion. He barely ducked a murderous blow that would certainly have split his head. He struck another, but merely hit the other's machete.

Probably there was not a foreman in the place who could have counted on any of his men helping him against one of their number. They ruled by too rough

methods. Now the nine remaining men of the gang rushed to the assistance of their fellow.

It took Phillips a sickening moment to realize the significance of such a fight. Though the lesser struggle at noon might easily have become deadly, that fact had not penetrated the consciousness of the man who had, like most peaceful people, never seen men in a contest involving anything worse than a few bruises.

He was witnessing a battle to the death. It was nothing short of murder—or would be, unless quick interference stopped it. There was no time for warnings, for orders, for talk. He must shoot.

The thought sickened him as he pulled the trigger. He aimed low, so low that the first shot missed; and the two struggling men showed no sign of having heard it. The others, coming to join the fray, hesitated a little.

And Phillips shot again. He had realized the necessity of practise, so that he could handle the weapon in his hand with a fair degree of accuracy. He had thought that, some time, it might become necessary to show that he could shoot in order to cow some dangerous wild-man of the woods. He realized now that he had never expected, even in his wildest dreams of battle to shoot to injure seriously or kill.

And the peon at whom he had aimed crumpled up and fell face downward. It was a ghastly thing to see, to know that he himself had done it. Phillips thought he would never cease to dream of that man, a human being, collapsing like a burst toy balloon, dropping the heavy knife from his limp fingers, hurling them out before him, falling, quivering on the ground a moment, then lying still.

Something of his horror seemed to reveal itself to the nine men who had halted at the first crack of his pistol. It had taken every vestige of color from his face.

And he saw that they thought to rush him—were coming at him with whoops of fury on their lips. The next group to that in which the affray had started was already breaking from the control of its foreman. From all along the straggling line came shouts of excited men.

The poor policemen, armed only with clubs and whips, since Haggins never trusted them with firearms, waited only long enough to see what was coming. Then they broke for the distant buildings, dodging behind the rubber-trees left standing in the clearing.

Phillips was alone, and the whole crowd would be down upon him in a moment. And once more he hesitated. Even the fresh danger failed to overcome the horror he felt at what he had just done. Must he do more?

If he emptied the magazine of his pistol on those who were coming, he would have time to reload it and thus to account for that many more before the farther men could reach him. If he waited until they actually attacked, he could never reload his two guns fast enough to keep up with what would follow.

And, while he hesitated, the men were almost upon him. They had knocked down their foreman, already winded with his battle. They rushed forward then, brandishing their machetes, shrieking drunken blasphemies.

Involuntarily Phillips shut his eyes as he pulled trigger. He had seen one man fall at his shot. The blink cost him the shot and a little of the fear a hit might have inspired.

The brain of any man who is not an arrant coward works fast under pressure of danger. Phillips thought it all out. The men had not been scared at sight of his pistol, were not scared when he fired it. Of three shots he had missed two. He must hit — hit them — to convince them that he was really worthy of fear.

And he fired again. The fall of the leader seemed not to scare them much. He fired and fired and fired—at last he was inspired by the rage of every living thing which realizes its life is being sought by another. He was in a daze of fury such as he could not have dreamed he could feel.

Only when the first pistol stopped working because it had been emptied did he pause to note the effect of his firing. The first group had turned in its tracks, was headed for the jungle. Madly he sprang after them.

Then he perceived that others were coming from all along the line. No longer did he think—he fired. And the line wavered. Six dead or wounded men had taught them something.

He went straight on toward the new advance, seeing that the foreman of the first group had taken advantage of their flight and was pursuing them, beating down two of the remaining ones with blows that must have killed them instantly.

The wavering line was not yet sure whether to go back or come on. Phillips fired again, recklessly, but with aim direct at the man who happened to be a trifle the foremost of all in the crooked string. He went straight on toward them as he fired.

He had quit aiming at feet or arms; there was no time for such niceness. He simply pointed his weapon at the trunks of the men and left to chance the hope that the wounds were not fatal. Two—three more of the peons he sent sprawling upon the rough ground.

Then the whole crowd lost its nerve. Those in front fairly fell over those behind in a mad dash for the shelter of the jungle. Perhaps because he had been too mild before, the men seemed to think he had gone suddenly mad. Even the foremen fled with the others.

Possibly his face reflected the hot fury of his soul. Phillips suddenly perceived that he had the cleared ground to himself.

A moment he stood with his one pistol pointing at the tangle of woods into which the men had disappeared. Another moment he spent in putting a fresh magazine of cartridges into the pistol he had emptied.

The thick jungle ceased to crackle under the feet of the panic-stricken fugitives. But he had not the slightest doubt that it watched him with more than a hundred eyes which he could not see.

With a shudder he turned then to the men on the ground. That all were not dead was noisily evident.

Two or three were howling like spanked babies. Others were groaning with severer wounds. Phillips looked quickly away from one who writhed in horrible contortions — and his eye fell upon one who would never writhe.

Believing that the policemen would not have run far as yet, he blew his whistle for them. And they came hurrying forward, having watched the fight out from behind near-by trees.

"Get Dr. Pinhon at once," Phillips ordered one. Then he set others to work on one or two of the wounded men who were bleeding hard. And one he despatched to the bungalow with instructions to get enough pistols to arm the ten officers. During the wait, he busied himself with the injured men.

He was sick, faint, at the sight of their wounds, at the thought that he had caused them. He wished that he had died before he ever dreamed of coming into such a life as this. An hour ago he had counted himself too gentle to do the things that Haggins did; now he had probably shed more blood than Haggins ever had.

And the dead men! Great Heavens—human lives upon his hands! He wondered if he were himself, the man he had always thought he was. He could not see how any one could have done other than he had done; but that fact did not mitigate the utter horror of having done it.

"*Por Dios!*" gasped Pinhon, coming at a run toward the scene. He had been raised in Cayenne, and was more apt to exclaim in Spanish than the Brazilian Portuguese. "*Que Sangre!*"

"What blood!" The words seemed to rive Phillips's anguished soul. And the doctor's look that accompanied the words—it blamed Phillips as if the new man-

ager had deliberately planned this ghastly thing.

"*Muerta ya!*" he pronounced quickly and solemnly over three of the still forms. He seemed to be talking to himself, as if his simple statements were such an arraignment of his superior in position as he might not utter openly.

And Phillips accused himself. Somehow, he could not get away from the thought that the thing might never have happened had he done his duty differently. Had he maintained Haggins's methods, cruel as those had seemed; above all, had he possessed the sense to keep the drink-crazed men unarmed—no occasion for such an unfortunate fracas could have arisen.

He wanted to get away from it, wanted to get to his room and shut himself from the sight of others, from the sight of himself were that only possible. He was physically ill.

But he must stay here. He could not go with the wounded men who were carried two-by-two in the one wagon the outfit boasted, could not make up for what he had done even by ministering to those who had been his victims.

He must stay, must somehow get the men back from the jungle and into their stockade, must somehow get them under semblance of control. God alone could tell what more might happen before that could be accomplished. God alone could even guess at the next move on the peons' part or at the results it might have. The peons themselves could not have told what they would do.

Three men seriously crippled for life if they lived at all; three stone dead; five pitifully hurt for the time! Could he ever get over it?

He must somehow communicate to the hidden men in the jungle the terms of their surrender. He was not far from right in doing this simply by going to the edge of the clearing and shouting at the top of his voice that, if one man would bring out all the machetes and lay them on the ground, the rest would be permitted to return without further punishment to the stockade.

That his voice reached them, that they considered his proposal, was evidenced by the sound of their movements through the thicket, by the echoes of faint murmurings and whisperings which reached his ears. But there was no response.

It had been long after four when the men had been got to the work, owing to the noon-time trouble. Now the short twilight of the tropics began and seemed almost immediately to end.

He perceived the utter impossibility of staying the night out where he was. The ground was sufficiently shaded by the remaining rubber-trees to make it impossible to see an approaching enemy ten yards. The edge of the clearing showed velvet black where the thicket began. From it a hundred men could creep out and be upon one before he had seen them.

Haggins had arranged wisely for the protection of his buildings. An outside row of electric lights always kept the ground lighted a hundred yards beyond them toward the jungle. It would be impossible for hostile bands to pass that ring of light without a watcher raising the alarm.

Back there he could add half a dozen to his forces. There were two engineers and four cameradas or serving men. It was possible that a few of the peons who had been too drunk to walk would now be sobered sufficiently to fight on his side.

It seemed more than likely that the upstart police officer would reconsider his resignation rather than risk his neck with the peons victorious. And, in the last extremity, Miss Reade could shoot far better than Phillips himself, not to mention the policemen who hardly knew how to work the automatic pistols at all.

Alas for even the faint hope in such plans. A search of all the buildings and grounds failed to produce the young officer. Phillips could not down the suspicion that he had got in some way to the men in the jungle to place himself at their command, the one man capable of giving

their mob spirit dangerous organization. It seemed, too, that the dozen or more men who had partly sobered up had also gone to join their fellows.

Phillips decided to send word to Miss Reade to get her boat away from the dock. While he hoped to be able to keep off any attack, there was grave danger. Sixty or seventy men armed with machetes might very easily prove too much for those he could muster, though they were provided with firearms.

Well toward the other side of the river Miss Reade would be practically safe. Though the natives could swim and carry a machete, they would be rather easily picked off in the water illumined by the cruiser's search-light.

He scrawled the directions, with due apologies for the inhospitableness of the request, on a piece of wrapping-paper he happened to have in a pocket. He told the camerada to assist the lady in casting off from the wharf.

Shortly the messenger returned, bearing a neatly folded bit of good stationery. Phillips's heart sank a little lower as he read:

> DEAR MR. PHILLIPS:
>
> Owing to the excitement of the slight trouble I had this afternoon with your ex-lieutenant of police, father has taken a decided turn for the worse. Dr. Pinhon says it would be almost surely fatal to have him endure even a few moments of our engine's throb, which is rather bad just now.
>
> Though Pinhon still holds out hope, my own is beginning to waver. I can see no hope at all for father's life if he should hear any more shooting or mob-rioting in the next twelve hours. I am very sorry that we must add to the burden already so heavy upon you. If it were my life, I could readily risk it; I know you would not have me take chances with his.
>
> Hoping you get your difficulties straightened out promptly with the men, and thanking you again for your kind consideration—

He had not finished the last words when there was a flash of flame that seemed like flaring lightning. In a second the lights all went out. A blood-curdling yell told that one of the natives had cut the feed-wire with his machete and taken the force of the current in doing it.

And the yell was taken up in another tone by sixty frenzied voices in native patois:

"*Abao!* Down with the gringo! Kill him—kill him—kill them all."

CHAPTER VI.

THE MASTER.

IN the first instant of that intense darkness which always succeeds the extinction of bright lights, Phillips seemed to see the men he had shot two hours before. So terrible had the impression been that it had risen before him every time he closed his aching eyes for a moment. The best of nerves go wrong in the tropics.

And now there would be more of them. It hardly occurred to him that his own body would be among the dead almost surely; that the peons' machetes were rather better weapons in the dark than firearms. It did occur to him that some of the mob might get past him and down to Dr. Reade's boat.

All these thoughts might have flashed upon him. In such stress the brain really proves what a wonderfully swift organ it is. But the men were taking their time in coming. Some of them still preferred to yell instead of mixing in battle with the terribly effective weapon Phillips had already used on their comrades. Some were ceasing the battle-cry and uttering personal appeals to the more timid.

Had he felt a little less horror of the afternoon's killing, Phillips might have begun shooting at the spot whence the sounds came out of the blackness. He waited, with the hope that he might be able to get his shots below vital parts of the men.

And then came the thing which, because he did not expect it, startled him with the first real fear he had felt.

Out of the blackness, slightly behind the sector in which he had located his wound-be assailants, came the swift

crackle of an automatic pistol. He could hardly have jumped more if the bullets had struck him. For his tensed nerves had thought of everything but that the peons should have been provided with firearms.

But the yell which instantly followed the shot was one of pain and terror. For half of the next second Phillips almost shared the new fright that came as the woods behind the men were suddenly illumined by eyes of light that bored hither and thither, picking out the peons, who dropped their matchetes and, with fresh yells for help and mercy, started pell-mell in an effort to flank Phillips's guard and reach the stockade.

And a voice roared above their yells, nothing less than terrible in its well-controlled fury; and Phillips at the same time comprehended the only possible significance of the lights. It was Haggins—Haggins and his party of men with pocket torches!

"Allessandro! Juao! Paolo! After them!"

The first name told what had become of Phillips's chief of police. He had gone to fetch back the man who could master the peons.

But Phillips hardly thought of that. He was catching the first reaction from strain far greater than he had dreamed. The darkness seemed to whirl about him. He caught at the trunk of a rubber sapling, tried to hold himself up, his last thought being that he should at least join Haggins in the pursuit.

He came to with Dr. Pinhon and Haggins standing over him.

"Lord!" exclaimed the manager, "I thought they had got you when I first saw you."

Phillips sat up weakly. He stared at the man who had come so opportunely, the man who could manage, the man for whom he himself should have managed during the other's absence.

"I've made an awful mess of things," he faltered weakly.

"Never mind talking about that now. I oughtn't to have left you here yet. You get to bed. There won't be any more trouble to-night."

Phillips's consciousness was not so far gone as to miss the undercurrent of disappointment, pity, even a shade of contempt which the other could not quite conceal with his generous words. But he had hardly closed his eyes since Haggins left. Once they had helped him into bed he slept the clock around almost twice.

It had been a disturbed slumber, in which he battled with savages and half-savages, in which dead men eyed him and called the curse of Heaven down upon him. He awoke with a groan and sat up.

Darkness had fallen after another day. The bungalow was quiet, the stockade silent. It was as all the other nights had been since he had come to the plant. He would have been sure, had he known that another day had passed — sure that the men had worked at their tasks and worked well. Haggins was back.

Well, he would have to go back too—back home to New York. All he could do would be to offer apologies for having undertaken a task for which, it seemed, he was so ill-fitted. All that his failure had lacked of utter completeness had been filled up by his delay in writing his confession and sending for Haggins earlier.

And this was the end, this the final awakening from the dream. He wondered how he would endure remaining about the place until the company's steamer should arrive and be ready for another departure a month hence. Surely his cup of humiliation would be full.

The less he saw of Miss Reade the better for his peace of mind. He wondered if the noise last night really had killed her father as she had feared.

No, he stoutly assured himself again, he was not in love with her. But he admitted that he might very easily become in love with a woman who interested him, fascinated him, charmed him as no other had ever done.

It was she who had inspired his last effort to attain the realization of his

dreams; it was that last effort which had completed his downfall and hurt him worst in her eyes.

And then his brooding was interrupted by the sound of voices. As they drew nearer, he was aware that Haggins and the girl were talking together. He then noted that the curtains of his room were drawn, shutting out the light from the lamps which had evidently been put into commission again.

"No," Haggins was saying, "I can't account for it. Of course he's utterly without experience in this line. I allowed myself to forget that because of the splendid recommendation Netcomb sent about him. He certainly does seem to have gone all to pieces."

"He didn't look like a man who would be a coward," Miss Reade put in.

"I'm not sure yet that he would be in circumstances he thoroughly understood," came in Haggins's voice again. "Sometimes I've wondered if he wasn't just a little too fine grained for the job. I'm really a terrible man. It has never come hard for me to be hard."

"Your hardness saved all our lives," Miss Reade stated in a voice full of remonstrance against the self-accusation in which Haggins was indulging. Phillips thought he would give several years of his life to have her use the same tone in accusing him of anything.

"That doesn't make it any nicer," Haggins argued.

Phillips could not help the feeling that the manager played for compliments. There was a note in the big man's voice which was different from anything his would-be successor had heard from him.

"Men shouldn't be nice—not if they're to do the big things. And I've always maintained that few things can be bigger than this carrying of civilization and civilization's methods among savages. Please don't think I am flattering—I don't feel as if I could say anything sufficient in the way of thanks."

She paused a moment, as if thinking how to go on. Then—

"But I'm glad to be able to say what I know will be about as pleasant a thing as a man of your sort could hear. A man who can do what you've done here must feel very keenly about it. So I'm going to tell you the truth, that, of all attempts I've observed in the way of turning inferior people into efficient workers, the only ones which have come near matching yours in any way were the missions of the old Spanish monks in the Californias. I've looked into their history pretty thoroughly. They rather beat you in civilizing; of course they didn't come near you in getting work out of the natives."

"Jove!" Haggins exclaimed; "you surely do tickle my vanity. I never wanted to be a missionary anyhow. I have had to put the work first and the civilizing anywhere it might come after the—"

They had paused just outside the bungalow, then started on down toward Dr. Reade's boat. Phillips could hear no more. He had heard enough. Haggins had certainly fallen in love with the girl. And the girl—it was impossible to believe she could admire to the extent she expressed without soon learning to love, if she had not learned already.

Yes, Haggins would be the one to enthrone the queen in the jungle domain. From what Phillips had seen of the man, he would do anything he set out to do.

Phillips wished, for the girl's sake, that he could believe more fully in the sincerity of Haggins's apologies for his own failure. Somehow he could not believe Haggins would have hesitated to speak ill enough of him, had the manager not cleverly sensed that excuses would sound better in the girl's ears.

Certainly the words had been fair enough. But no man who disciplined as Haggins did would dodge foul methods, should fair ones fail to get him what he wanted. Haggins could afford to sound generous about a man who had earned only pity and contempt, and who would be got out of the way without any further opportunity to deserve anything better.

Phillips resolved to wait for the manager's return and settle things anyhow. The sooner he had made his miserable confession the better. Though he could not remove his physical presence immediately, there would be only relief for all concerned to have it definitely understood that his official connection with the plant was at an end.

Phillips went out, half an hour later, into the main living-room of the bungalow, as he heard Haggins's steps returning.

"Hello, old man — got rested up?" Haggins's whole gait and face betokened elation, happiness that could not come down instantly to anything like the verbal castigation he might warrantably have administered under the circumstances.

"Had anything to eat? You must be hungry," the man went on. "You've slept just about twenty-four hours."

"No, I'm not hungry yet," Phillips replied. "I think the mess I've made of things has taken away my appetite."

"Oh, you mustn't let it worry you," Haggins spoke with continued generosity. "We all make mistakes," he added tritely.

"Not many make as big mistakes as I seem to have made. I don't suppose it's necessary for me to resign. Still, since you're not in a position, I believe, to fire me, it would save time. Want it in writing?"

Haggins sat down slowly, deliberately.

"Look here, Phillips," he spoke even more slowly—"are you sure you want to resign?"

"I'd a little rather not be fired," Phillips responded.

"But do you want to quit? I'm not sure that it's necessary yet. Of course those four men you killed will probably bring down some government investigation. If you quit, it will be an acknowledgment that you did wrong. I'd a little prefer to insist that the killing was in self-defense or defense of the foreman and perfectly justifiable."

"I hadn't thought of that," Phillips said dejectedly.

"Well, it's to be considered. But it's not all. You'd be quitting a mighty fine position here."

"One for which I have displayed utter incompetence," rejoined Phillips.

"Inexperience rather than incompetence. I had no business to leave you here so soon. I'd rather you stuck another six months, while I make a slow shift of the responsibility to your shoulders and see if you really can't carry it."

Phillips had not expected anything like this. His head still ached. To think, he closed his eyes. Instantly the vision flashed before him—wounded men, blood, the dark native who writhed in hideous contortions, the ones who did not writhe or groan.

"And kill some more men?" he cried out in the horror of it.

Haggins eyed him narrowly.

"You mustn't lose your nerve about it," he said calmly. "The men you killed were trying to murder you or some one else. Most of the world regards a murderer as worthy of death, and all the world recognizes the necessity of killing him to save the life of his victim or one's own life."

"But it could all have been avoided," Phillips mourned.

"Perhaps," Haggins partly agreed. "Of course the big part of our job is to avoid it. But you want to remember that the men you killed were potential murderers all the time. You've got to look at every one of these scoundrels the way I do and think, if I don't hold him, he'll come after me and get me. Every break they make I figure as a move against my life, and I nip it in the bud and nip hard.

"Anyhow, don't decide now. You've plenty of time before there's any chance of getting down the river—think it over."

And Phillips thought it over. The fact that a man of Haggins's experience advised sticking was worthy of serious consideration. But Phillips's final reasons for staying were quite different from those Haggins might have wished them to be.

For he still believed that the peons

could be governed by a rule of justice, even with a little kindness mixed in. He thought, and convinced himself, that Haggins's whole view-point was wrong.

The men might be potential murderers, dangerous enemies; but they were also potential friends. Phillips came to wish to stay more to prevent another man of Haggins's type from coming than for his own sake.

CHAPTER VII.

TRAPPED.

FOR a month Phillips felt as if he must go for a reason quite different from that which had influenced him at first. Miss Reade had won his heart. And Haggins had won hers.

Since she rather avoided Phillips's presence, there was no danger of his betraying his sentiments toward her. He alone suffered at every thought of her.

All unconsciously he was developing a bigness of character such as was beyond the capacity of the efficient Haggins. He reached the place where he could face the sorrow of seeing his love lost, in order to undertake his big experiment in handling the half-savages as human beings, as friends rather than enemies.

Outwardly he conformed pretty much to the régime. In little ways he tried to demonstrate his fairness when he could handle any case alone. It seemed to him that he got as good results as Haggins got.

Inwardly he was resolved and preparing for a definite, published revolution in the entire system, to begin immediately after he was left in charge. He came to long for the time, though the longing was mostly based on the belief that Haggins would take Dr. Reade away with him and marry Miss Reade. He hoped that, when she was gone, he could forget.

But all his plans hardly prepared him for that which came. Dr. Reade was still in a condition which left one in doubt whether to call it lingering death or almost imperceptible recovery. Dr. Pinhon insisted that it would be perilous to move him. And Haggins seconded Pinhon's persuasion.

It was at the end of three months more that Haggins returned from his usual daily visit to the cruiser. Several times he had hinted strongly of departing soon for the founding of the next plant. The company's steamer had arrived during the forenoon.

"Well, Phillips, I congratulate you," Haggins began with a good deal of mirth in a voice not given to gaiety of speech.

"What about?" Phillips asked.

"You're the boss here now. I'm going with the steamboat at the end of the week. Going to pick up a new outfit of men and start for the ground on the other river. Incidentally, I'm going to bring some sort of a parson back with me—and you can congratulate me."

"I wish I were as sure of being in line for congratulations as you are," Phillips responded.

"Don't talk that way," Haggins instantly countered forcefully. "If the prospect buffaloes you, you'd better not attempt it. I think you're going to win out now. I've been watching you.

"Anyhow, you've got to hold them down this time. If anything happens to the plant, the company's going to hold you responsible. If anything happens to Miss Reade, I'll hold you—and you know damn well how I hold." He said it with a half-smile but with volumes of earnestness behind the smile.

"What?" Phillips gasped. "Is Miss Reade going to remain here until you return?"

"Her father can't be moved yet. He's rather worse just now. Pinhon says it would be fatal for him to attempt to stand the motion of the screw ten miles," said Phillips.

Then he suddenly turned the subject.

"By the way, what have you got against Pinhon?"

"Against Pinhon?" Phillips returned in amazement. It was true that the young

native doctor had never seemed very friendly since the disaster of Phillips's previous attempt at rule.

"You don't seem to hitch much," Haggins went on. "You really want to cultivate him and advise with him. He knows these people as you don't—even as I don't. And he's a fearless little devil. You can count on him for anything in a pinch."

"Why, I've never thought much about him one way or other, except that he seems a pretty clever doctor," Phillips admitted. "I imagine that, when he and I are the only two civilized people around, we'll get quite friendly."

And yet he doubted it. Now that the thing had been pointed out, he began to wonder just what was wrong about Pinhon. Vaguely it seemed as if the doctor might resent the bloodshed Phillips's fiasco at ruling had brought about among Pinhon's own race. But Pinhon never lost opportunity to praise the iron rule of that régime which Haggins conducted, and which love of his own people must dislike even more than the deaths of a few of that race turned temporarily desperadoes.

But there was worse cause for worry than the possible feelings of the native doctor. It seemed that he had too successfully concealed his regard for Dr. Reade's daughter. To be thrown into close contact with her, to stand as her protector that nothing might befall her until his rival could return and marry her—surely this was a situation to try his soul.

And that was far from all of it. The changes he had anticipated making must identify themselves with the beginning of his control as a complete alteration in policy. Unless he made those changes at once, and made them very clear, he would again be in the position of keeping up Haggins's methods too weakly for effectiveness.

The changes, since they had not seen them tried out and worked, must be in the nature of experiment—and any experiment may go wrong. He was prepared to assume responsibility for the plant. He had not dreamed that he must again take responsibility for the safety of the sick man and his beautiful daughter.

Their presence complicated the situation, made it a lot more than he had bargained for in his own mind. Once more he hesitated, almost on the point of throwing up the whole thing before it should be too late. The mere diffidence about upsetting others' plans deterred him—and Haggins went.

Phillips decided to give Miss Reade voice in the matter of his contemplated changes. With all the men working at the machines, and under better trained foremen and men advanced now to superintendencies, he was soon able to get time to visit the boat to which the girl had returned immediately after the departure of the steamer.

It was necessary to make the visit promptly. The first move in his plans called for a big "powwow" to be held that evening in the stockade, to give opportunity fully to explain the new régime. He had yet to arrange to have that affair as pompous and impressive as possible.

As he reached the wharf he met Dr. Pinhon coming from the little cruiser. At first sight nothing strange in this fact appeared. Then something in the appearance of the young physician startled the new manager of the plant.

Pinhon's lips were working violently. His hands waved in angry gestures. He paused to light a cigarette with fingers that shook violently. Then, as he saw Phillips approaching, his whole demeanor altered.

"*Buenas tardes, senhor,*" he bade with a cavalier bow that seemed overdone. "I am going to put my knives in order."

He hurried by without waiting for a reply. For a moment Phillips was at a loss to comprehend the strange statement. Then he perceived that the overdone manner had hidden an insult, the slurring reference to the surgical work Phillips's three days' previous régime had occasioned.

Phillips's heart sank. He would be long in gaining any worth-while aid from the native doctor. He had planned to see him before the evening meeting and enlist his services in the form of a speech backing up the new order.

As he reached the boat, Miss Reade called through a cabin window that he must wait a few moments until she could change her gown. She came out to the cockpit soon. To his surprise she was arrayed in her oldest and worst-worn khaki.

"Mr. Phillips," she greeted, "how fast is that little steamer?"

"I've really no idea," Phillips replied. "As I recall it, we averaged about eight miles coming up-stream."

"Well, this boat will do ten. I think we'll catch it."

"Why, what's the matter?" Phillips asked in surprise, and without anything like the relief he had imagined he would feel at some such solution of that part of his problem which concerned her.

"Did you see Dr. Pinhon just now? He proposed to me—and he didn't take refusal kindly. He told me I would see what it meant to violate the affections of a Brazilian gentleman!"

"Good Lord!" Phillips gasped.

"Of course that makes staying impossible. You can't very well lock him up in your carcel — you're too apt to need him. And father had better take the chance of the run than to do without medical attention entirely. Would I be asking too much if I invited you to help me a little in getting the old engine going? Or, perhaps you can spare me a man to go with us—some one you don't want very badly."

"Yes—I guess you're right," Phillips agreed with her indisputable statements. "Certainly I'll help you."

He fell to with a will on the powerful motor.

"We'd better prime it and start it up," the girl suggested. She bent down to the feed-pipe with a small oil-can from which to squirt the gasoline into the cylinder heads. She turned a petcock.

"I thought I turned the cock under the tank." She spoke in a puzzled tone, disappearing into the cabin. An instant later she was back, once more opening the valve she had tried first.

"Good Heavens!" she gasped, "it's gone."

"Why—why—how could it go?" Phillips asked.

"The tank was arranged to drain outboard in case of a leak. It's sprung a leak—or one has been made. We had a thousand gallons aboard."

The two looked at each other a moment in wonder. Then, as by common impulse, they went together into the cabin.

They tiptoed past the man sleeping on one of the "Pullman" berths — the bare shadow of a man—and passed the galley to reach the bulkhead before which the big tank was built in. The indicator on the face of the bulkhead stood at absolute zero.

"We have a hundred gallons or so in the place," Phillips mentioned when they had returned to the cockpit. "Can you figure how much it would take before you could catch the steamer?"

Together they figured out the normal gasoline consumption of the cruiser's engine and the number of hours in which it could overtake the boat ahead.

"It wouldn't be safe without a hundred and seventy-five gallons. That leaves a least possible margin," Phillips decided.

"I'm afraid so. But—I'd undertake it with a hundred and fifty," the girl replied.

"I'll go see what we have," he offered.

He went at a run. Here was another of those unexpected things which upset his plans. He had thought to present his arguments and hear hers in less than half an hour. The half hour had gone; he was almost sure there was not sufficient gasoline to be of any use; and he had not yet mentioned the question of starting his new régime. Besides, it began to look as if Dr. Pinhon's hitherto well-hidden but

now openly violent affection for Miss Reade was a matter that might easily affect the plans.

Hardly had he reached the office in the bungalow when he turned to see the girl's face in the doorway, whither she had followed him.

"It's no use, Mr. Phillips," she said in a frightened tone. "I just noticed the generator. All the brass parts have been removed."

For two months he had been steeling himself against emotions concerning this girl, another man's sweetheart. During the discussion of getting away he had managed to keep his interest centered on the effect of events upon his plans.

Now, as he saw her white, scared face, he realized how much more terrible was her predicament than his.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LASH OF CONTEMPT.

FOR a moment Phillips sank into a chair with a sense of utter defeat, the feeling that he was bound hand and foot.

For her predicament was his. No man could see a woman in the position in which she had been placed without doing his utmost to protect her. And, on the other hand, her being there had completely complicated the problem with which he had started to deal.

It seemed to Phillips that a man could hardly have been put to more of a test; that it was too much of a test for any man. The task of reconstruction was enough—to have this added to it made a situation utterly impossible.

But her predicament!

Her father hovering about death's door, the only doctor in hundreds of miles mad with hopeless love for her and apparently reverting to savagery in his disappointment, the way of escape barred—it seemed that at best she could but see her loved parent perish for lack of medical aid.

At worst—the very fact that Pinhon had shown himself a gentleman at the beginning made it the greater problem how bad a savage he might become at the end. That he was a clever man of the same race as the peons was almost certain indication of what he might do with them.

Phillips, whom alone she might trust for honorable purpose, had failed to give indication of ability to do anything with them at all, was far from sure of his own ground in any respect.

Splendidly capable as she was, this was a situation easily too much for any woman. It was too much for any but the most extraordinary man. With an almost audible groan, Phillips admitted to himself that it was too much for him. It needed a man like Haggins.

For the first time in months he permitted himself to look at her with some thought for the manner of woman she was. For an instant he was all but swept from his feet. All that he had not allowed himself to think or feel rushed through his soul.

The woman who was in this cruel situation was the woman he loved as he had never dreamed man could love woman, for whom he would easily die, though he might never hope to possess her as his wife. And again her predicament was his. Her problem had become a part of his own—vastly the biggest part.

The misery of his hopeless love, of the almost hopeless situation, overwhelmed him in that moment. It wrung from his lips a groan.

Somehow he had felt in the beginning that she wanted to get away from the place she regarded him as too weak to control. Now the fear of his weakness broke into anger and beat down her usual perfect self-control.

"Are you afraid or homesick?" she asked with a sharpness he had not dreamed of hearing.

It stung him into self-defense. Bad enough to have to give her up, without having her regard him with a contempt at least not wholly merited.

"I am afraid for you," he answered. "It would be hard to think of any woman in your position now. To think of *you*—"

"Don't worry about me," she interrupted as he stopped himself from saying too much. "It is my father who, it seems, must suffer. Since you're not a doctor, you can do little for him. It is not essential that you do anything more for me. I can take care of myself."

She turned on her heel and started from the bungalow door. Phillips leaped to his feet.

"Miss Reade," he called after her, "won't you—can't you understand?"

She turned back as far as the door.

"I'm afraid, Mr. Phillips," she said evenly, a little harshly—"that none of us can quite understand you."

And she was gone, leaving him to make the most of that.

An hour later he brought himself up with a jerk. He was wasting time. He must decide and then act. And he was getting to no decision, much less to action.

For three months now he had been studying the peons individually and collectively. He had been trying to work out a system which should accomplish what Haggins accomplished, and without Haggins's cruel severity. He had not been able to decide upon an ideal workmen's system such as a Ford might put into effect with intelligent mechanics all about him to select from.

His was no picnic program. For a time it would call for a more rigid handling than the quicker and somewhat more haphazard methods of the man who had left. Haggins had kept them all in terror and got results. Phillips hoped to get the same or better results by terror only for those who ought to fear.

After all, it was the only method he could hope to work at all. A man who really hates to hurt another is incapable of such terrorism as marked Haggins's management. And Phillips would always hate to hurt; could never make up his mind to hurt without the pause for inquiry which destroyed half the fear.

He got up, went down to the factory buildings. He was going to try. His best for Miss Reade could be only his best for the plant.

The first of the long, low sheds he reached gave him plenty of evidence that it was high time to bring some system to bear hard and firmly.

The men had not begun to loaf as they had loafed on the last day of his previous attempt to manage them. But all the work had slowed down in the few hours since the man they feared had left them.

He choked back his misgivings and made for the superintendent. He said nothing of the slowed-up conditions. He asked the man to get his peons together before their new manager for a talk. His words had been written out and committed to memory weeks since.

Briefly they commended the men for the advance in efficiency they had made. With some slight equivocation Phillips mentioned that he shared with Haggins the belief that they had outgrown some of the features of the present system.

Henceforth foremen would not be armed with whips. They would not strike a man for laziness. They would report him to the superintendent, who would deal with the case. If the man would not work better after one trial, he would go to the carcel.

On the other hand, henceforth there would be two tables in the stockade. One table would be provided with more monkey-meat and fish, and once a week with some delicacy from the officers' mess. That table would be for those who accomplished a certain amount of work above the average now expected of each man.

A still higher output would entitle a man to a higher wage. Any man who wished to do so, and proved worth it, would be permitted to go home and bring back a wife, and would be helped to build himself some sort of house outside the stockade.

The best men would eventually be made foremen as vacancies occurred, Phillips stated, with a glance at the present foremen that was intended to remind them that their jobs were dependent upon their conduct. And he hoped, he added, to put the foremen in uniforms as soon as these could be ordered.

He had quite rightly guessed the chief cause of the envy with which Haggins's policemen were regarded by the others. The love of a uniform runs well up into the scale of civilization; and the sight of a lodge parade makes one doubt if it ever ends.

Phillips's enthusiasm waxed as he spoke. Then it waned. He tried to see why his words were not greeted with cheers, at least with shining eyes.

He explained over again with more detail. He mentioned other things he hoped to effect, the making of such a Sunday holiday as they were accustomed to have, the securing of a good priest to give them church services.

Still there was no response. He asked finally if there was anything the men did not understand, and had his fair Portuguese translated into the patois of the natives by the superintendent.

"Don't they want it, Paolo?" he finally asked this boss.

The answer was a shrug. Paolo did not know, or did not care, or did not believe. Or, was it that Paolo, who was in authority as things now stood, did not wish to have them different?

But the men themselves — why were they so stupidly unappreciative? It could only be that they did not understand, that mere words could not make them understand. And he put words into action.

"The foremen will give me their bastinados," he commanded.

They came forward sullenly. Their whips had been their means of getting work out of their men, their badges of authority, perhaps the implements of a cruelty they had been mean enough to enjoy.

Phillips had not expected the foremen to be pleased. One or two of them began to toy with the clubs which still dangled from thongs on their left wrists.

"You will keep those," Phillips announced loudly enough for all their men to hear distinctly. "You will use them only in case you are attacked or to protect the life of one of the men in a fight. You will not beat men with them as punishment."

They would never have dared question the most inexplicable order Haggins might have given. They dared to question Phillips.

"What will we do then?" The men who spoke let their disgust sound in their voices.

"You will report to Paolo if a man will not work. Paolo will see that the man works or goes to the carcel. Paolo will report to me," he added.

At last the men understood better. He saw significant glances passed from one to another of the peons. He gave the order for the resumption of work, and went from that shop, headed for the next.

Outside he paused. The looks of understanding had not satisfied him. Somehow he felt that they had indicated a sense of license rather than new obligation. He was not sure but he had seemed to them to be introducing the honor system in a school for utter incorrigibles.

Well, he had started now. He must go on. But two hours remained of the working day, and he must see all of the gangs in that time. Certainly he made his announcement at the last of these visits with little remaining of the enthusiasm wherewith he had begun.

Still convinced that the men did not wholly understand the improvement in their lot he was attempting, he had two of them accompany him to the main storage-house and take from it a quantity of showy things and dried fruits to be displayed in the company store which had lately been put in charge of one of the more capable natives. The storekeeper was instructed to explain that no man's credit was good for the price of these

things unless he could show the company's wage-voucher for the new "better grade" workmen.

Lastly he set carpenters to work at the new table of better board. To the policeman on duty inside the stockade he left the task of explaining this to the curious on their return from work. The new régime had begun.

Would it work?

Phillips sat up late that night, as he had done three months earlier, his eyes fixed on the moonlit waters of the river, his brain wearily asking again and again that question. Somehow he could not throw off the sense of failure, the feeling of utter discouragement.

Subconsciously he noted the tiny light in the cruiser's cabin. Suddenly he roused himself to a forgotten duty as he realized that the light marked the scene of old Dr. Reade's long-drawn struggle for life.

He strode from the porch of the bungalow and down the walk to the dock. The uneasiness he felt about everything made him hesitate over the simple warning of his approach which might save the girl from fright. So little liking had she shown for him of late that he found the offering of any needed services embarrassing.

It took a certain amount of bracing himself for the calling of her name. Then, just as he was about to speak, her voice sounded from the cabin:

"I have you perfectly covered with my pistol!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE WORSE THAT CAME.

FOR the instant Phillips was startled out of his intended word of warning. Then he perceived that he was not the person addressed at all.

"Go ahead and shoot," another voice answered within the tiny room. "Without you I do not care to live."

It was only then that Phillips noted the fact that the speech was not English. He had grown more accustomed to hearing Portuguese than his own tongue. The voice of the second speaker was Dr. Pinhon's.

"Oh, why must you be so foolish?" the girl was pleading on the instant. "You were a good friend."

"And I became a lover," retorted the infatuated doctor.

"A lover!" Miss Reade echoed. "A chivalrous lover you are, seeking to take advantage of an unprotected girl who has to depend upon you for her father's life. I thought at first you were a gentleman."

"But I became a lover," the physician rejoined.

"Please don't talk like a fool, doctor," the girl went on. Evidently she had the situation sufficiently in hand with her pistol. "Love which tries to take advantage of a woman when it might protect her—"

"Oh, Senhor Phillips will take care of you, no doubt." The interruption was a sneer at the absent manager.

"Senhor Phillips, at all events, does not come and threaten me with attentions I don't want," she retorted.

But the words fell heavy on Phillips's ears; they conceded pretty much the contemptuous opinion of him expressed in the doctor's tone.

He had felt justified in doing a little eavesdropping. A good doctor is as essential to a jungle outfit as a manager. Phillips could ill afford to come out in open hostility to his physician unless it were absolutely necessary.

But he had heard no more good of himself than falls to the lot of less justifiable eavesdropping.

"Senhor Phillips is not in love with you." Pinhon fell back on the theme which seemed to strike him as the dramatic expression of a divine passion.

"Senhor Phillips is a gentleman," she put it.

"Not a lover," persisted Pinhon. "I try to be a gentleman; but I am a man before that, and a lover."

"Oh, go away," Miss Reade bade him

wearily. "And don't come back. I can do everything that can be done now for father. I am sorry, but I warn you that another visit from you I shall regard as trespass and treat accordingly."

Phillips heard the doctor's feet moving across the polished deck of the cabin. Then came the fumbling upward step from the cabin to the higher cockpit floor.

The girl was following him out, one hand in the pocket of her khaki skirt evidently pointing a pistol. Phillips got a glimpse of the doctor's face as they emerged from the cabin with its light upon the man's features. Pinhon was watching the hand in the pocket with the eyes of an animal at bay and desperate.

Phillips, still anxious if possible to keep out of the fray, moved swiftly to a hiding-place behind a barrel, and got his own automatic trained on the back of Pinhon's neck. The doctor got across the cockpit and clambered onto the dock.

Oddly, it seemed to the silent watcher, he made no attempt to get his own weapon into play, as he might have done under cover of the movements necessary to climb out of the boat.

"Now, *run*," snapped Miss Reade.

"We shall run together yet," Pinhon whispered hoarsely, "to death, if need be —but together."

Phillips kept him covered until he disappeared at the landward end of the pier. The girl stepped back toward the cabin; at the door she reached inside and pulled the switch that turned off the lamp.

"Miss Reade," Phillips called softly.

There was no response; in the darkness he could see nothing of her under the awning. He repeated the call.

"It is Phillips," he added this time.

"Oh," she responded weakly. "Did you see him?"

"I have had him covered with my pistol ever since he came out of your cabin. I came merely to inquire if there was anything that I can do for you to-night."

"And you saw—and heard?" she asked.

"I saw and heard enough," he said grimly.

"And you let him go?" she gasped.

"What could I do?" he demanded defensively.

"By asking, you make it quite clear that you could do nothing," she answered wearily.

"But I must try to keep—" He started to explain the need for the doctor in the plant.

"Please go away; I'm too tired to talk," Miss Reade urged.

Nonplused by this seeming rudeness, Phillips turned without a word and went back to the bungalow. The sense of failure pressed harder than ever as he undressed and got into his bed.

But the next morning brought rather unexpected encouragement. He was at hand for the beginning of the work. Here, there, everywhere, he hurried about, to remind the peons of the new régime, to explain it more fully. And he saw glimpses of hope that some of them were getting the idea.

Within an hour it became evident that the punitive end of discipline must make itself felt hard and sharp a few times. The foremen were rather at a loss how to proceed. Sending a man to the carcel seemed a poor way to get work out of him.

Phillips showed them better. At the end of the hour he was making his second round. He soon came across the lazy peon he sought for an example.

"Vital," he asked the foreman, "have you reported that man to Miguel?"

The foreman shook his head.

"Do so at once," Phillips bade, himself beckoning the superintendent, who came forward with a look as puzzled as that of the foreman.

"He won't work," said Vital, as if he were carrying out some part. "See, he has made but half a roll this morning."

"If he does not do better—come up to the standard and keep up to it, have the policeman take him to the carcel," Phillips ordered.

He went on down the line of the patented spindles Haggins had devised for making roll rubber.

"If that man doesn't work better, report him to Miguel," he soon told another of the foremen. "Miguel will put him in the carcel."

He said it as much for the workman's benefit as for that of the foreman.

But there were the two or three who deserved commendation, who were working with their minds upon the upper table at the stockade feeding-place. Phillips felt that he was getting far better results than he had dared to hope.

He had not been without fears that he would have the carcel jammed beyond its standing-room capacity. He had reason enough to lay aside that fear by the time he had completed this second round of the buildings.

A third round showed that the new discipline was better understood. A man had gone to the carcel from each of the sheds. That had been enough for the present. The new system had its sting as well as the old.

It might not be quite so prompt, but it went deeper, since the men were more or less toughened to frequent blows with the lash. The others who had been thus warned had seen the point of the warning.

Phillips now hurried to the stockade and made sure that a very excellent dinner awaited those few who seemed likely to win the reward of special speed. Their table had been placed near enough to the other so that all at the lower one might see and envy.

By the end of the afternoon working-period, Phillips could not help a certain degree of elation. Things had worked out unbelievably well. Only one man had been sent to the carcel since noon. He had personally O. K'd a score of tickets crediting men with the extra wage entitling them to the higher table privilege.

The thing was succeeding. He could well afford to discount the minor difficulties that were already showing their heads.

Meanwhile he had done what he could to keep tabs on the movements of his doctor. Pinhon had apparently attended the few sick in the infirmary and otherwise gone about his business as usual. Phillips was certain that the love-sick physician had kept away from the cruiser. Just now he had gone up to the stockade to look after a mild case of the ever-present jungle fever.

As for Miss Reade, Phillips had not made any visit to her, did not intend to make any. He had sent a serving-man down to the boat to inquire for any wants, and to supply them from the general stores. She had very clearly indicated to him that more than this was likely to be taken by her as unwelcome attention.

Yet he was more hopeful in regard to Miss Reade. His method was succeeding. Surely that fact could not be long in reaching her notice, nor the difference between his system and that of the man to whom she had become engaged.

His happy meditations were interrupted by the appearance of the one man who seemed likely to present serious difficulty. Dr. Pinhon approached the bungalow without any evidence of embarrassment. Obviously he did not know that Phillips was aware of his too ardent wooing.

"I have just ordered the patient brought down to the infirmary," he stated.

Phillips was surprised. He himself had seen the sick man, had listened to the fellow's account of his aches, had recognized the touch of fever he himself had already suffered half a dozen times and learned generally to disregard.

"He hardly seemed sick enough for the infirmary," Phillips remarked. "I thought a few doses of quinin would set him up all right."

"He's a pretty sick man," Pinhon announced. "I'm not sure that it's fever at all in his case."

"What do you think it is?" Phillips demanded.

"A doctor who diagnoses too promptly shows himself a fool or a charlatan," was the sage reply.

And Phillips's gratification with his day's work had gained its drop of bitterness. Until it was proven that the sick man suffered from no serious infectious disease, he might only hope that he was not going to have on his hands an epidemic with all that such scourges of the tropics may mean.

He was particularly sorry, too, that the victim should have been one whose morning work had shown the quickest appreciation of the new disciplinary methods, the very first to have gained a seat at the upper table in the stockade's mess shed.

Four nights later Phillips left his nearly untouched supper and hurried to the infirmary. Every other worry had been lost in this—and all his elation seemed to have ended in worries.

"How is he?" he demanded of Pinhon.

"Which one?" asked the doctor in turn.

"The first—the worst one," Phillips answered.

By way of response Dr. Pinhon pointed to a cot covered with a sheet stretched over the body that lay beneath.

"My God!" Phillips gasped. "Haven't you made out what it is yet?"

Pinhon shook his head slowly. Phillips, eying him anxiously, got the feeling that the doctor found rather satisfaction than distress in the situation. He wondered if the man could be so insanely love-sick as to wish to see the whole outfit wiped out with some dreadful disease.

"The second one?" he finally inquired.

"Pretty bad," said Pinhon. "The last one hasn't got far yet; but the medicine doesn't seem to take any hold. I have been trying everything."

"Have you made a post-mortem?" Phillips asked after a pause.

"I'm going to to-night. They don't like the idea much of cutting a dead body; and I'm waiting until they won't be apt to find it out."

Phillips went back to his room in the bungalow. It seemed that his fate was sealed. Luck was against him. No system could be maintained successfully in the face of the fright this strange disease was sending through the camp.

And it had seemed that this new method of dealing with the men was bound to succeed. The second day had all but filled up the new table; the idea had taken wonderfully; and the effect had spelled what Phillips knew he conservatively estimated at a ten per cent increase in the actual accomplishment of his working force.

Now the men who had showed best at first had become the worst. Most of them seemed to have gone into a state of almost helpless terror. He could not understand why they showed so much more fear than the poorer workmen.

But the phenomenon was there; the men who had made the first table were the ones now on the edge of collapse with horror and dread. Every time he came upon them he found them crossing themselves as if to ward off some spirit evil.

All afternoon he had been trying to explain this peculiar phenomenon. Was it due to the fact that the more capable men were the ones with the keenest imaginations? Did they visualize the danger as the others were incapable of doing?

Suddenly he stopped in his tracks. What a fool he had been with his idiotic psychology of the dread of those better men. The explanation was much easier than that.

The three sick men had all eaten at the upper table. The others thought that had something to do with their sickness. That was why the number of winners of the privilege had fallen more than half yesterday and had gone down to absolute zero to-day.

Phillips hurried back to the doctor, a fresh idea pounding in his brain and springing to his lips.

"Pinhon," he cried, "is it possible that some of the food has been infected or spoiled? You know, these men have been

put on a better diet than the others. I had a lot of dried fruits sent up to be cooked for them — and there was fresh ham the first day. I—"

He paused. Pinhon was eying him peculiarly. The doctor's lids dropped over his dark-brown orbs.

"I hadn't thought of that possibility," he said slowly. "If such is the case I'll find it out in the post-mortem."

"Send me word the moment you've learned anything, no matter what time it is," urged Phillips. "I'll have samples of those fruits brought over to you, if you want to analyze them. We've got to get at the reason for this."

Back in his room he could only pace the floor. Before him stood the constant picture of a camp of dying peons, their emaciated, tortured bodies writhing in pain, their groans echoing through the infirmary and the stockade, the dead piling up faster than they could be buried.

He must go and arrange with Miss Reade to have her boat drawn as far as possible into the stream, unless she wanted to take the chance of drifting down the river for good. He had held off from such action partly because of his determination not to inflict unwelcome attentions on the young lady, partly because he could not bring himself to admit his fears of an epidemic to another. But there must be no more delay.

The girl received him with more courtesy than she had shown in dismissing him at the time of the last visit he had made. Hastily he told her of what was going on.

"I'm in hopes it will prove to be some poison that has got into the food. That, of course, could be remedied," he explained. "I just thought of that. Pinhon hadn't thought of it before, himself. I—"

The girl suddenly opened her eyes in a manner indicative of surprise. She stared at Phillips with a puzzled frown.

"You say Pinhon hadn't thought of poison before?" she asked.

"Didn't seem to," Phillips answered hurriedly, anxious to go on with his suggestion for such safety as he could help her gain. "He said he hadn't."

"Don't you know that he's told the men that their food had poison in it?" Miss Reade demanded.

And Phillips saw a great light. Pinhon had mischief afoot. The men had been victims of simple fever, of which the camp was apt to be full enough at this time of year. Pinhon had taken advantage of them, worked on their imaginations—

No—Pinhon had poisoned them!

"Miss Reade," he suddenly asked, "is your father apt to need medical attention any further?"

"Not Dr. Pinhon's," she answered.

"This camp is going to be without a doctor until Mr. Haggins gets back," Phillips announced.

He hurried back up the wharf. As he reached its end he blew his whistle for the policemen. He ran on that they might not lose a step of ground in getting with him to the infirmary.

In a moment they were coming toward him. He called to them to turn and follow him. Then he got the surprise of his life.

Half a dozen of them had come together; two more were hurrying up just behind them. He ran straight into the group.

Suddenly he was tripped. As he tried to save himself by grasping the sleeve of the nearest, he felt three of them upon his back. Before he landed sprawling on the ground the eight were hurling their weight upon him.

"Fools!" he snapped, "I'm not the one you're to arrest. I'm Senhor Phillips. Get up!"

But the hands that were clutching for his pistols went right on and snatched the weapons from under him as he lay.

"*Si,* Senhor Phillips!" spoke the voice of one. "You are under arrest, if you call it so. You will come with peace to the carcel, or we shall have to shoot you with your guns. Even for *un* Senhor

Americano it is murder to put poison in the food of so insignificant a person as a peon!"

CHAPTER X.

FLIGHT.

FOR a moment Phillips struggled from sheer rage at finding himself helpless physically for the first time in his life.

He had never been in a situation where his big muscles were really needed, save in football. Much less had he found the place where they would not serve him to some extent. But now he lay flat on his face, with nearly a dozen men on his back, and those chosen by Haggins for their strength. The realization of helplessness maddened him.

But only for a moment. He did not need the pressure of the cool steel of his own automatic in the back of his neck or the quick command, "Lie still!" to bring him back to sense. He ceased to struggle.

"Well," he grunted, "I'll go to the carcel with you, if you're fools enough to believe that I've poisoned those three men who had slight fever attacks until your doctor took them to his infirmary and started in to kill them. Get off me and take me."

"I shoot," two of them said at once, "if you make a move save to go."

Phillips knew who had his two guns.

His brain worked swiftly. Chiefly he reflected that the men barely knew how to fire the weapons; that, if he could gain ten feet in the darkness, they would be as apt to miss as to hit him.

But, could he make ten feet before they would shoot? The others were holding fast to his arms, his shoulders. One clung to his neck, almost choking him even after he had got up.

Whatever he did he must do quickly. The carcel was hardly a hundred feet from the spot where they had leaped upon him. They began to shove him toward it, taking no chances of allowing him to do his own walking.

Almost before he could consider what moves might most nearly bring about the results he sought, they had rushed him half-way to the open door of the place.

There was no time to think, he must act; no time to throw them off their guard by seeming acquiescence in his capture; he must meet them with his strength against the strength of their whole number.

And he acted. With a mighty thrust of both arms at once, he sought to hurl the men on each side loose from their grips upon him. At the same instant, seizing the wrists that were about his neck, he pulled downward and ducked in an effort to accomplish the wrestler's trick of throwing a man over his head.

The man who held his right arm was not thrown off. He still clung to Phillips's sleeve. The fellow on his back proved heavier than he had expected, slid a little to one side, got his wrist free and jammed it into Phillips's mouth.

And then one of the pistols snapped. The noise was followed by a howl from the man on Phillips's back, but Phillips had forced down any squeamishness that arose at the thought and had bitten deep into the wrist that sought his throat.

It was jerked from his teeth with a wrench. Phillips swung the fellow about by the other wrist, felt the impact as the man was bumped into one of his fellows.

He drove his left fist into the face of the man who held his sleeve; thrust back with his elbow and caught the pit of another's stomach, as this one tried to leap upon him. He saw that one—he thought it was the one whom he had bitten—had fallen to the ground. He sent another sprawling atop the writhing figure.

Then, with a last mighty effort to keep his balance while he did it, he succeeded in freeing a leg to which some one was clinging desperately. He caught a blow from a club; but it glanced from his shoulder. He ran.

His only way led straight toward the stockade, a hundred yards ahead. With the policemen shouting, getting to their

feet, rushing after him, he had no choice of directions. It seemed as if the stockade wall must block his escape.

And the automatics began to spit at last. He felt a sting of flame in his arm. He tried to add speed to his running; for he would now be helpless in their hands if they caught him thus wounded. He could hardly guess how serious the hurt might be.

The stockade door burst open, a hundred lights gleamed within. Some of them were the electric torches Haggins had taken with his expedition into the jungle. Plainly the uprising was a matter of some planning.

Their torches would make of him a perfect mark, if he ran farther toward them. And he would be helpless in the mob even should he succeed in making it.

He swerved aside, though the ground off the path was rough-plowed and made running more difficult for him than for them. They were used to tramping, running, leaping over all manner of broken ground; he had been raised where there were pavements.

The direction he had taken was the last he would have chosen. It led straight into the jungle, away from the works he still felt that somehow he must protect. But the other side had been fenced off from the river's edge after two or three sleepy peons had toppled into the water and barely been saved from drowning.

The whole pack was yelling after him as he ran. He leaped from the tops of furrows into the bottoms. Once he nearly fell. He caught himself with his hands on the loose earth, dashed on.

The flash of a torch barely lit up a huge rubber-tree's trunk in time to save him from dashing headlong into it at a speed which might well have put him beyond further effort.

Thank Heaven they had at least lost the use of the automatics. He had felt the jerk of another bullet that tore through his trousers. But they had nothing wherewith to reload the weapons.

They were gaining on him. He could but guess at the distance he was covering. If he could gain the jungle—get a few feet from its edge—he would be lost to them. But—where was the jungle?

He had never been a track athlete. All his training in running had left him the last man on the sub-team to whom a long run with the ball would have been entrusted. Bull strength had been his forte, not speed.

His breath was coming shorter and shorter in wheezing gasps. It seemed as if something within his head were about to burst with the terrible strain to which he was putting his heart.

He stumbled again. Again he managed to raise himself. As he had half gone down, a yell of triumph had sounded at his very heels from men who thought they had him and were so nearly right that he could hear their breathing of whispered curses as he eluded them.

His run was becoming a trudge. He could not keep it up. His feet, clogged with the mud of the field, seemed weighted with tons of lead. Most of the torches behind had gone out with the swift movement. He could see nothing ahead. Behind him was the pant of the pursuers' breathing, so close that he expected every instant to feel a leaping body on his back.

And he went down again, tripped over something almost knee-high. His arms struck into wet leaves, his face buried itself in them, until a heavier stick of vine or sapling seemed almost to jerk his head from his shoulders as his forehead brought up against it.

Instinctively, though, he knew that this was the beginning of the jungle. He began to crawl—to crawl with the rapidity of a base-runner who has overestimated the distance he can slide. With a sense of overwhelming joy he heard the fearful grunt of one of the men who had fallen harder than he behind him.

But he might not yet look back—he could only do the best that was in him to imitate the serpents that were made for getting through the jungle. He scrambled on and on.

It occurred to him to shift his direction. He seemed to have ten or fifteen feet advantage of the pursuers now. A slight turn might send them past him in a straight line.

A little farther, and he lay still, too exhausted to do anything but suck in the scant oxygen the hot, heavy air contained. He heard that they had stopped, had begun to hack at the brush with their knives.

But he was safe now. In a moment, as soon as he had caught his breath, he would move on a little more, and there would be no danger at all of their trying to beat him out. Then—

Then he would work his way out again, get a line on their positions, get past them somehow, and to the works again. His flight had not been for himself. He was quite sure he would have given up somewhere in that run, if not before he began it, had it not been for the thought that thus he would leave Miss Reade at the mercy of the desperate native doctor.

Heavens! but his arm hurt. Still—not enough to keep him from getting out. When he was rested—perhaps—and had got to her—Miss Reade would dress the wounded—

CHAPTER XI.

THE JUNGLE.

HE came to with a start, the feel of a clammy thing moving across one of his outstretched hands awakening him with that horror instinctive in all mankind for the beasts that crawl. Whether he had fainted or slept he could only guess. He sat up.

Silence and darkness! Never in his life had he realized how black dark could be. It seemed palpable, pressing upon him, taking his fevered breath from him. Darkness, silence—thirst!

He must go to the edge of the jungle now, see what was doing there, if a man might see anything, escape in the darkness if it were not better lighted than this. He must get to the bungalow—to fresh, clean water.

A great leaf smote him in the face as he started to move. It was wet; left drops of water trickling down the mire and sweat on his face. Water—

He caught at another leaf, and heard the water drip down from it. He had lost that drink. He must manage better.

Slowly he felt about until he found another of those huge leaves which seemed rare among the tiny blades of lower growths. Carefully he lifted its lower edge, carefully formed it into a cup.

Water—enough of it to wet his mouth, to trickle into his throat, to make him mad for more. He lost another leaf-full of the collected mist in his haste. A third leaf he hurled from him as his lips came in contact with some lizard or insect.

At last he got another tiny swallow—then another—and another. It braced him, enabled him to think of things. He remembered the work before him. He must not wait for more water. He must go to Miss Reade's assistance.

Only God could know what was happening to her. Dr. Pinhon had had but one possible purpose in all his machinations. He was too intelligent to dream of maintaining a rule of this place. He wanted the girl in his power—was foolish enough over her to imagine that he could carry her off through the jungle. He could hardly dare to think of staying here or going down the river to meet Haggins.

Phillips got to his feet. Silently, cautiously, he spread the leaves of the thick copse to make room for his feet and body as he took a step forward. His arm was stiff and sore; but he felt too sure now that the injury was only a flesh wound to waste time in further investigation of it.

A snake leaped up from his feet and went clattering off through the branches of clinging vines and the thick rushes. Then the silence was unbroken again, save for the eternal dripping of water from the mist-soaked foliage. Phillips stood still until he had recovered from

the start of the sound, then cautiously moved a little farther.

Reason told him that the peons and the policemen would have set themselves in a long row of pickets, probably with lights enough to show him up the moment he emerged from the jungle curtain. No doubt Pinhon would have got out the supply of hunting-rifles by now, and provided the guards with a weapon they knew a little how to handle.

But he could not help the fear that a closer guard had been set inside the edge of the jungle itself, that any move might bring a native upon him with a leap and a blow of the machete that would end his career in a crash. It kept his heart in his throat, as he strove to move the thick branches and vines and the wet leaves from his path step by step.

If hope deferred makes the heart sick, fear deferred gives courage. After a dozen paces had been taken without arousing anything to startle him, he moved a little faster. He grew careless about the swish of the branches behind him. He began to look almost eagerly for the long row of torches he more than half expected to mark the guard line.

He could hardly estimate how far into the jungle he had managed to burrow in his flight. At the least it must have been more than twenty or thirty feet. At the most it could hardly have been twenty yards.

Now it was almost as difficult to estimate how far he had made his way back. But it suddenly came to him that he could hardly have come less than thirty steps, and that even his very short, cautious steps must measure at least eighteen inches. Again he became cautious. He must gain the advantage of a sudden break unheralded by previous movements, if he could not accomplish the still better feat of getting through the line entirely unseen.

Another slowly cleared step and another — a third — a fourth — more — a dozen. Surely it was time that he should see the lights of the plant through the thinned grove of rubber-trees, even though the guard were protecting itself with the darkness.

A sickening thought arose within him. He put it down, refused to recognize it as really thinkable. There could be no question about his having taken the right direction. He was sure—sure—

But, where were the lights?

He stood still. There was something wrong. He had walked back farther than he had come—if he had been walking back at all.

Back in the bungalow he had a very excellent little compass which he had not yet used as a guide on such a hunting trip as was still one of the unrealized prospects of his sojourn in the wilderness. As a further precaution he had worn a little pocket-compass as a watch-charm.

He touched it now with his fingers, his thought to strike a match and get his bearings, even if he should draw the fire of some watching guard. The glass had been shattered on the little thing; the tiny magnetic hand on its pivot had been lost, presumably in the scramble with the police.

Again he used his will to quell his fears. Surely he had veered only a little from the path. If he kept straight on he would come out a few yards from where he had entered the jungle, his slightly diagonal course accounting for the extra distance.

He pushed forward. The terror of being lost was only that of losing time in what he meant to die or to do for Miss Reade, but it was sufficient to overcome the terror of attack.

Still no clearing, no sign of near or distant lights. Again he stood still, pressing his hand to his sweating brow. He tried to peer upward through the dense foliage. Had it been daylight the mist would have shut off the sun from giving him any inkling of direction.

Had he struck off in a course parallel with the edge—to the right—to the left? Had he gone straight away from the edge ever since he had wakened and tried to get back? Could he retrace these steps and

go on straight that way? Could he go straight in any direction?

The experience of every man who was ever lost and found again was against any such hope. Yet he would have been different from all the men ever lost and found again—and from all who were never found—had he not tried it.

He beat his way, reckless now of noise, to the right. He turned straight and beat back, much farther back than the first tangent had taken him. It seemed as if the racket he made must surely be heard by Pinhon's watchers. Now and again he paused to listen for some move on their part.

It flashed upon him that they might not move for his noise, might stand still and wait to surprise him when he emerged.

Well, better the rather slim chance of getting shot than the delay of further wandering. Incidentally he could find out how much time he had lost in his sleep or faint, whichever it had been.

He would light a match. For the first time he was thankful for the price he had invested in a water-proof match-safe.

The meager half dozen matches in it were hardly so much cause of thanksgiving. He took pains to get out his watch before he struck the light. Its flash showed him the time.

One o'clock! It was five hours since he had made his dash into this jungle. Five hours—and Pinhon in control of the plant! And the invalid Dr. Reade and his daughter at the mercy of the reverted savage!

Then he held the match high, moved it about to the right and the left, dropped it only when the burning of his fingers became intolerable. It had brought no shot to tell him which way lay the clearing.

He was on the point of striking a second, when it occurred to him to shift his position considerably before doing it. Once more he moved far to the right. Then, when another match had spluttered in the wet leaves after burning his fingers, he turned back and went far to the left. When the third match had failed to bring any response from the guards, he turned again to the left and walked straight on. It should have taken him some distance back of all his previous positions.

As the fourth match blistered his finger-tips, he set his jaws upon a panicky desire to rush about in hopeless circles. He stopped again and drove his thoroughly frightened brain to thought. There could hardly be the longest of gambling chances in using up his two remaining matches.

It remained to shout for help. He would make it a shout of surrender, a request for a guarantee that his life be spared on condition of his going peaceably to the carcel and awaiting whatever penalty fair trial might impose. Such a proposal must win an answer.

He began with a loud halloo.

He had hardly hoped that would win a response. It was loud enough to cause the watchers to listen for what more he would say—unless he was worse lost than he could yet imagine.

"I'll surrender, if you'll take me quietly to the carcel." He pronounced the words slowly, distinctly, in a very roar.

He would not have trusted their promise at all, save as a guide to the clearing. He had no compunction about making a promise he would break to the best of his ability the moment it had got him an answering shout to provide that guide.

But the shout did not come. His voice seemed hardly to penetrate through the thick veil of darkness about him, was acoustically shattered by the muffling foliage. He had got hopelessly lost.

CHAPTER XII.

THE EDUCATED SAVAGE.

MISS READE saw Phillips's hasty departure from the cruiser with a feeling more kindly toward the new manager than she had experienced since his pitiful

fiasco in his first attempt at governing the natives.

The feeling was so kindly toward Phillips that it made her a little uncomfortable about herself.

No girl of her brains could have lived the extremely lonely life she had without developing rather more than usual habits of introspection. Since Haggins had removed the fascination of his presence she had caught herself wondering several times if the man had not swept her a little from her feet by his masterful personality.

Her father's scientific explorations had brought her in contact with few men outside two widely different types—men who mastered wildernesses and men who mastered books. With the professors and doctors she met during her brief stays in America or Europe she was quite out of harmony by virtue of the strenuous disposition she had inherited from her father. By contrast with these, the big men who ruled savage lands as agents of civilized governments or engineers of vast mercantile projects seemed veritable heroes in her eyes.

Judged by standards of sheer efficiency and accomplishment, Haggins easily measured up with the best of her heroes. Besides, he had gained the advantage of appearing in sharp contrast to the pitiably inefficient Phillips. What made Phillips's case all the worse was the fact that she had felt a good bit interested in him at first sight.

And yet, in spite of Phillips's sorry failure, in spite of the unenviable light in which Pinhon had placed Phillips's actions at that time, it was Phillips who still awakened misgivings in her heart about the value of hero-worship as a guide to love. Few are the women whose brains absolutely rule their hearts anyhow—and the few are psychological monstrosities if they are not moral monsters.

When Haggins's personal magnetism had gone with his presence on the steamboat, her misgivings had redoubled. It had been absolutely essential to her peace of mind with the thought of the future that she should come as nearly as possible to quarreling with Phillips. He had at least furnished the excuse by his double failure to take any action in regard to Pinhon's attentions.

Then he had made her more uncomfortable about her fiancé by his brief success in demonstrating that Haggins's harshness was not essential to the maintaining of discipline. She had been far from seeing all of Haggins's methods of exacting obedience. She had seen enough to induce distinct qualms, to set her excusing him on the ground that all men who did the work he did used pretty much the same methods.

While she was excusing, she went on quite involuntarily to excuse Phillips for taking her at her word that she could look out for herself with Pinhon. She knew well enough the necessity of a doctor in such an outfit as that Phillips was handling and experimenting with. She felt that it were unjust to expect him to lock up the young surgeon or turn him into an open enemy if that could be avoided.

But now—his last question had revealed that he might have been hesitating to antagonize Pinhon on her account as well as that of his outfit. He had asked if she could get on without the doctor's help. And, upon her affirmative reply, he had started off almost at a run to put the doctor where she need not fear him any longer.

Phillips, successful with his more moderate rule, Phillips showing a capacity for quick enough action when needed, Phillips just now in accidental contrast with Pinhon, Phillips a lot more of a gentleman and pleasanter companion than the man she had determined to marry—aroused a feeling of kindness which disturbed her in her determination to be loyal to her future husband in every thought.

Certainly Phillips was losing no time now. She heard the sharp blast of the whistle, the same as her fiancé had used before his departure. In a few minutes

Dr. Pinhon would be eliminated, so far as any danger to herself or her father was concerned.

There were not to be even minutes. She heard the quick shots, the yell of pain, other yells of rage and triumph. It seemed almost impossible that Phillips should have led his men around to the infirmary so quickly. More likely, she thought, he had encountered the doctor on the way.

Then came the loud cries of the men pouring forth from the stockade. She saw glimpses of their torches. She was decidedly puzzled by this, a little worried. Yet she recalled that Phillips's whistle for the police had brought the whole outfit out on one other occasion.

"He hasn't got discipline among them yet," she sighed.

Then, as she listened, it became evident that the whole crowd was rushing off across the cleared ground. It occurred to her that Pinhon might have started for the jungle, that Phillips might have called all hands out in pursuit of the poisoner.

Suddenly she got up from the seat in the cockpit. It flashed upon her that there might be need for her services. She was skilled in minor surgical work, and had the art of bandaging well learned. And now there would be no doctor in the camp.

A moment in the cabin enabled her to secure a roll of gauze and another of lint. She thrust these into a little bag, together with two or three bottles of antiseptic solutions and a flask of brandy.

It did not occur to her to fear for herself. She had her pistol, and knew how to use it. She paused only long enough to ascertain that her father was asleep, and then clambered to the wharf and hurried along it.

The yelling had passed almost from earshot behind the buildings which all faced the river across a narrow plaza. In the misty darkness she could see no one as she turned to the right in the direction from which she had heard the shots and uproar.

Though the lighting plant was equipped to give all this street abundant illumination, it was arranged so that only a few lights burned except in emergencies. Tonight the yellow incandescents hardly served to do more than emphasize the darkness between them.

But she was familiar enough with the walk. She had soon reached the spot whence the rumpus of a few moments ago had seemed to come, but a few feet from the front of the little carcel building with its windowless walls.

She was about to turn a little nearer to the light which shone on the open door of the building when a groan on her other side caused her to wheel about.

Luckily she always carried a very small pocket torch in her "working" clothes. By its light she now made out the prostrate figure of the wounded policeman.

She spoke to him, got no answer. Then she bent over him and began to search for his hurt. She soon discovered that he was lying in a pool of blood. He was the man who had clung to Phillips's back and had caught the bullet meant for the manager as he was swung about in Phillips's attempt to free himself.

The bullet had entered his side just below the ribs. A feeling of hopelessness came over the girl as she located the source of the little stream of blood.

Bandages she might manage; she was familiar enough with the commoner ailments of the tropics to give the medicines a doctor would prescribe; she could draw a splinter or even lance a boil or a felon. And here the first case was one for the probing after a bullet, internal packing, drainings, stitchings—a regular operation.

Then she braced herself. She called for help to shift the injured man's position. If possible, she would move him nearer to the carcel's light before attempting any bandaging at all.

When her call brought no response, she called louder. Again her heart sank. Phillips's discipline had been short-lived. Surely, if he had not lost control of his men in the excitement of chasing the doc-

tor, some of them would have been left here to look after the plant. For more reasons than one she had hoped his success would be better than this.

Well, at least she could somewhat slacken the flow of blood. And the man's pulse told her she could scarce wait for that until she should hunt about the whole camp for aid.

Hastily tearing off the shirt which was the only garment above his waist, she got busy with lint and antiseptic solution. Then she made a tight knot of absorbent cotton, soaked it in the bichlorid, and, after wrapping a strip of gauze twice around the body, pressed the knot firmly over the wound and began to bind it tightly into place.

It was the method that would have succeeded with her father, had his wound been no wider than this man's bullet-hole.

It was no easy matter to lift the man sufficiently to get the gauze under him at each turn. And she could hardly imagine a worse spot for any approach to what she had learned of surgical cleanliness.

When she had got the sixth circle drawn about him she was dripping with perspiration, her hands trembled from weariness in pulling to get the pressure on the wound. She essayed to bring the ends of her strip of gauze together. One of them slipped from her fingers.

She managed to get the end again without the complete loosening of the bandage. But the slight jerk of the slip had released the plug a trifle. For the moment it looked as if the whole job would have to be done over again.

She felt her nerve giving way now. She had no more gauze with her; the lint could not be torn into strips. For a moment she felt a feminine impulse to "drop in a heap" on the ground and give way to tears of despair.

Then the realization that a life depended upon her doing nothing of the kind braced her. She pulled her flagging energies together. She decided it were better to make the best of what she had done than to try to do it again.

With a supreme effort she got the ends crossed far enough to make the knot. This she turned hard upon the cotton plug. Once more the flow of blood was stopped.

Next it was necessary to get some stimulant down the wounded man's throat. To do this she had to turn him upon his back. He was heavy—Haggins saw to it that his policemen were a little the strongest men available.

Thrice she tried unsuccessfully to turn over the limp form without such a wrenching as would start the bleeding again. She was summoning strength for the fourth attempt when she heard footsteps approaching from behind the carcel.

With a wave of joy she distinguished that one of the pairs of feet were shod. The natives insisted on being barefoot, even cutting out the soles of their shoes when they had to wear uppers to protect their ankles.

It would be Phillips. At last she would have the help she needed. She only hoped that his men were not far behind with the love-crazed doctor in tow. She doubted little that Phillips could compel the young surgeon to perform an operation even as a prisoner.

"Mr. Phillips," she called, as the men seemed about to swing across the front of the carcel and turn down toward his bungalow.

The steps were halted. Dimly, through the fog, she could see the men. They turned toward her. A big pocket-flash was pointed at her just as she found herself puzzled that Phillips's form did not loom a head taller than the natives.

"Ah," came in purring Portuguese and a voice she had learned within the past four days to hear with terror—"as usual, trying to help the fallen. As the temporary manager of this camp, permit me to thank you, and to assume the honor of escorting you to the bungalow for a short rest before you have to return to your duties with your poor father."

"Temporary manager!" The words came in a gasp.

"*Si, senhorina.* The brave Senhor Phillips has taken flight. At present he has hidden himself in the jungle. No doubt he will come out of his shelter when Senhor Haggins has returned to insure peace hereabouts. Until that time I am in command—but yours to obey."

His mincing tone was more menacing than any threat he could have uttered. For one second Evelyn Reade felt herself swaying, felt the world whirling about her, saw the darkness growing darker before her eyes.

She was glad that she still knelt over the wounded policeman. Had she been standing she could not have kept her feet.

Then she summoned her faculties by a wrench of will. She put her hand toward the pocket in which reposed her pistol.

"No!" snapped the doctor's voice, all its suavity dropped. "This time I have you covered with my gun."

But, as he spoke, apparently alert to the fact that she would fear him vastly more than his pistol, and that shooting her was the last way to gain his own ends, he leaped behind the nearest of the peons, pushing the fellow between them.

He was perfectly right in his conjecture. His threat had not stopped her hand. His movement was not quick enough to stop the pressure of the trigger. But it was the peon whose body intercepted the bullet.

And Pinhon was quick enough to take advantage of the confusion thus brought upon the girl. Three steps forward he pushed the man she had shot, holding him upright until, sensing the purpose of the move, she began to raise herself to her feet. Then, with a strength she would not have credited him with, he hurled the wounded man directly upon her.

"Take her!" he shouted as she was bowled over from her half-balanced position.

The men leaped to his bidding. As she fell her finger pressed the automatic's trigger once more; but the bullet went wild. Her arms were caught, wrested upward. She was jerked to her feet.

"Even the gringo women are murderesses," Pinhon observed to his duped underlings. Then, speaking to her, he continued with assumed indignation in his tone:

"You have shot one of my people. I regret the necessity of imprisoning a lady. But you must come. I shall, however, be more merciful to you than your fellow-countrymen have been to mine. I shall not confine you in the wretched carcel your friend invented."

Again he addressed the one of those with him who was in the police uniform:

"You will take the prisoner to the bungalow."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RESIGNATION OF HOPELESSNESS.

WHEN it was finally borne in on Phillips's mind that he was utterly lost, a very madness swept over him. He raved, cursed, caught at twigs that hung about his face and tore them for the sheer inward need of smashing things.

For his own sake he could have taken the matter very philosophically. He was hardly afraid of anything the jungle might contain so near the clearing of the rubber company.

Even if the coming of a rainy day should not give him a sight of the sun, he might have waited for another to give such a view to provide him with bearings. A day's fast would not hurt; he could probably find edible palm-tops enough to keep from starving for several days.

Somewhere to the eastward, not more than two or three miles at the outside, lay the river; and he could hardly reach it more than two miles from the plant, above or below.

Indeed, had he had but himself to think of, it is doubtful if he would have run, even from the enormous odds against him. He would have chanced being killed or put into the carcel. It had been the certainty that his imprisonment was intended solely to remove his protection

from the girl that had enforced upon his attention and action the necessity of keeping alive and free at every cost.

He had thought that it would be but a matter of a few moments' waiting to get his pursuers spread out in such fashion that he might pretty easily break through their line and get back to the bungalow and more weapons of defense.

And now he was lost—hours had passed since he had evaded the foremost of the enemy and buried himself in the thicket so effectually that he could not even get himself out. He was lost—and Pinhon, with a hundred and fifty-odd half-savages at his beck and call, had Miss Reade at his mercy.

Common sense told him that the one and only thing to do was to lie down where he was and wait for daylight. He could not have done it to save his life. He plunged on and on, shifting his direction, though he knew well enough that it is humanly impossible without any guide to keep from walking in circles.

Once he stepped on some huge serpent that struck, hissing, and hung by its fangs to his boots. It was over before he had begun to feel the fright the thing gave him afterward. But he pushed on his hopeless wanderings in spite of the fear of a less fortunate repetition of the accident.

Twice he toppled headlong into huge ant-hills. It seemed that his clothes were full of the crawling, stinging pests. But he could not make up his mind to stop for any attempt to remove the garments and clear himself of the insects.

His motions through the dense foliage kept him brushed clear of gnats and mosquitoes. The wet leaves, however, had soaked his clothes and his skin, and his perspiration irritated the ant-bites until he felt galled from head to foot.

And weary—he had never dreamed that a man could stand who was as tired as he felt. The wet had turned the whole jungle into a morass through which he waded, most of the time above his ankles. Every step had to be a conquest of vines and small branches against which he sometimes threw his whole weight in vain, then shifted to a weaker spot, knowing that he thereby lost what little course he had made shift to maintain.

But Evelyn Reade was the only white woman, her dying father the only white man back at the camp. And there was Pinhon—he could not bring himself to stop.

Once he found comfort in the thought that she was an excellent shot and always armed, the boat well stocked with guns and pistols. It was more than likely that Pinhon had been shot dead by her hours ago. There was no question about her nerve to do the deed if necessity arose.

He stopped as he thought of that. In that case haste was but waste of his energies, which would be needed to keep a safe camp for her as soon as he could get back.

Then the hope faded out. Dr. Pinhon would never be fool enough to chance a visit to the cruiser until he knew there was little danger of meeting a bullet. What he would do would be to drive his befooled peons to take her. He would care nothing at all if she used up all her ammunition on them and choked the river with their carcasses.

Well, she would save two bullets, one for her father and one for herself. Probably that had been attended to already. Probably they were both dead long since. Five hours— Oh, God! But that was not the sort of thought to let him drop his exhausted frame to rest.

And then he realized that daylight was coming. The thought of it carried no hope—only the realization that more time had elapsed. And the daylight itself brought no help.

Through the thick mist and the thicker clouds above it was impossible to discern whether the sun rose upon the one hand or the other. It was completely invisible. The heavy mist became a downpour.

Still he was lost, as helpless to defend the girl he loved, as useless for her need as if he were not at all. He was half-

blinded by twigs that had struck him in the eyes. His body was scratched and bleeding in fifty places. His clothes were hardly more than ribbons.

But he still had his knife with him. Now he could at least see his trail through the thickets. Perhaps he could come upon some path of wild beasts and thus make his way at last to the river whither they had gone to drink.

Soon, indeed, he chanced upon what seemed a way broken through the dense foliage. He followed it around a zigzagged, broken, irregular circle and came back to the point from which he had started before he realized that he had foolishly tracked some of his own wanderings of the night. A second of clear thinking and looking would have shown him the freshness of the breaks in the thicket.

It was hours before he came upon the sort of trail he sought. In that vast jungle vegetable life has choked out most of the larger animal life entirely by making its ways too nearly impassable. But now he almost stumbled over a huge ant-eater that scrambled off swiftly through its own tunnel under the foliage.

This gave passage at least for his feet, and he could crawl through it bodily where the vines and branches were too thick for his trunk. Even thus his progress was intolerably slow. He went so far that he was sure he was going away from the river instead of toward it. Yet he pressed on, as he was to do again later, because the thought of retracing his steps was more disheartening than the fear that he was adding steps to retrace.

And suddenly the foliage thinned. He was too tired even to look ahead after a glance failed yet to penetrate to the open. But he pushed through the dozen yards remaining. And the river was at his feet.

At first he could do nothing but throw himself flat on his stomach and put his lips to the surface and drink. It seemed as if he could suck the whole stream into his parched mouth. That it was swollen and muddy affected him not at all. He would have drunk had it been covered with the green scum of a foul pool.

At length he raised himself to his feet again. The added strength would easily make up for the time he had given to the drink. But now he was up against an even chance of losing more time.

Not quite an even chance, he thought. Since he had come up the river to the plant, he felt that he ought to be able to locate something soon which would show him if he were now below it. Since he recognized nothing he now saw, he decided to gamble his first mile to the curve below on his having come out above the camp.

His progress was slow. Though the jungle thinned a little at the river's edge, most of which rose considerably above its surface, the way was on a slope so steep as hardly to give a foothold. It took him an hour and a half to reach the point round which the river had seemed to bend as viewed from above.

His heart sank as he drew nearer to it. He more than half expected to see at least the company's little dock — Evelyn Reade's cruiser. The one best hope he had had, that she might have managed to clear the boat from the dock and let it drift, was almost beyond hoping.

But what he saw was only another bend in the tortuous course of the stream. It gave him a different misgiving. Below the camp, about five miles, there was a double bend in the river. It was more than possible that he had not recognized any feature of a bank, which was about like every other part of the river's edge for a hundred miles, which he had seen but dimly, since he had arrived just at dark at the camp.

Of the turns above the plant he knew but the little he had seen on the maps, and that not clearly remembered. He had not had time to interest himself in minute study of what lay beyond his business.

At all events, the thought of going back to the bend above, not less than three miles distant, was discouraging. The

bend below was less than a quarter of a mile away.

Over and over he had been impelled to plunge into the river and improve his progress by swimming and wading with its rapid current. The fear of the deadly little piraynas had held him back.

These ferocious fish are dangerous enough in their attacks upon a man with a whole skin. They are maddened by the taste of blood, so that, for him, with his sleeve clotted from the slight bullet wound he had received, and his face and hands scratched and torn as they were, an attempt to swim would be taking chances indeed.

But the failure to find the plant thus far had disappointed. The feeling that he was utterly too late anyhow made him desperate. His ant-tortured body fairly twinged with longing for the cool of the water. He took the chance.

As he plunged into the stream he struck a submerged stump that nearly knocked the breath from his worn-out body. But the cool water seemed such heavenly relief that he would not go back. Instead, he swam out toward the middle of the river.

Here the current was swifter, he had little to do save to keep himself afloat to make a progress many times faster than he could have achieved afoot. It seemed that he was not to encounter any of the dangerous little fish.

Before he had realized it he was abreast of the point toward which he had started. He looked ahead. For more than a mile the river was straight enough to give him a view not less than a mile and a half down that bank from which he had just come, on which he knew that the Gordon company's plant lay.

And the dock was not in sight; the jungle fringe of the river was unbroken as far as his eye could reach. A moment he lay almost motionless while he forced himself to face the fact that the entire distance he had come down the river had been in the wrong direction, must be retraced.

Then, as he urged his weary arms and legs to the effort of swimming ashore again, since no man could hope to swim up the swift river, he found himself suddenly in a greater danger.

He was caught in an eddy that amounted to a whirlpool. He had been drawn sufficiently near the center before he discovered his plight so that all his efforts seemed wasted; he fought, pushed, floundered, tried in turn all the strongest, swiftest strokes he knew, only to find himself being drawn inevitably toward the thick driftwood that marked the vortex.

Here the downward suction made swimming hopeless. He caught at one of the larger pieces of log which were already beginning to bump and bruise him. By clinging to this he could keep his head afloat.

How long?

Suddenly a great calm came over his racked brain. The agony of fear for himself seemed gone. The bitterness of his failure lost itself in the comforting thought that he had tried his best. Even that worst agony of all, his fear for the girl he had learned, though hopelessly, to love, sank into insignificance.

He was face to face with that vast eternity before which the difference between the worst of earthly circumstance and the best is of infinitesimal consequence. Instinct prompted him to cling to life to the last moment; but he knew he had reached life's end.

CHAPTER XIV.

LOVE'S MADNESS.

DR. PINHON seemed to feel some sense of danger in making too clear to his deluded new subjects that his whole purpose and intention was the gaining of advantage over the white girl. He made a show of better purpose.

Evelyn Reade was none too ceremoniously thrust into a small storage-room adjoining that which Haggins had used as

office and general reception-hall. The room was empty, save for some piles of old magazines which, from their dates, had probably been brought along by the former manager to while away his time in the first voyage up the river.

The room was well adapted to the purpose of a prison. Haggins had stoutly barred all the windows of the bungalow, knowing that revolts were always to be taken into consideration. A strong man might have broken the lock on the door leading to the larger room; though it would have done Miss Reade no good to do so, since she heard Pinhon's sharp assurance to the guard he put there that her escape would mean death.

Evidently Pinhon had too much else on his hands for any forcing of his attentions upon her at the moment. It sounded to the girl as if he were turning the crowd loose to work its will upon the plant in general, since the whole place resounded with hoarse shouts of men drunk with excitement, if not with mescal.

She had plenty of time to reflect, to wonder what madness possessed the doctor, who must know that he would be terribly punished in the end; to wonder upon her own fate—though that she had determined would be death.

She, too, reached something of that calm which comes of clear realization of things eternal. Even her father's death no longer alarmed her—together in another world, she thought, they would laugh at the slight terror as to the manner of their end.

Yet the manner of her end was shrouded in such ghastly uncertainty as to make it very different from the prospect Phillips was to face a few hours later. She could but plan to compel the love-crazed native physician to shoot her—a thousand plans, none of which seemed quite certain of accomplishing its purpose.

Through it all the most disquieting thought concerned that which she would hardly have supposed would so disturb her. That Phillips should have run away, left her thus to Pinhon's mercy, buried himself in the jungle in a panic of cowardly fear—somehow it hurt.

And, perhaps she was right in feeling worst about this. Suffering, torture, the mode of death for ourselves or even for those we love better than ourselves—are things temporal; character is eternal. The most horrible death were less pitiable than a cravenly, cowardly flight from death.

Phillips a base coward—running pell-mell from a few unruly natives—hiding himself, crouching, fearful, regardless of what might happen to a woman he had shown signs of loving—the picture was a sickening caricature of that which the man had made on her mind.

Somehow she had thought him big and fine at heart. Somehow she had feared that, after she had married Haggins, she would discover she had chosen the baser man of the two. Sometimes she had feared that she wished she might find it out before she married Haggins.

Yes, Phillips's cowardice hurt. Even now she was not sure that it would have hurt so much had Haggins done as badly.

At length came the end to reflection. She heard the brisk step of the doctor. He crossed the outer room rapidly. He spoke a curt word to the guard.

There was a jingling of keys, then the creaking of the lock, the turning of the door's knob. The light in the storage-room had been turned off—it was turned on again from a switch outside.

Shrinking into the farthest corner of the room she watched the dark face as he strode into its center. It seemed strangely different from the face she had known during nearly four months through which he had played the well-bred physician bent upon the performance of his high duty of healing.

Now it was cruel, hard, bloodshot-eyed, leering lipped. An evil grin spread itself over the whole countenance as he surveyed her shrinking figure.

"You haven't got me perfectly covered this time, eh?" He spoke hardly above a whisper. Then, as she did not answer,

but continued to eye him with orbs wide in fear, he went on:

"But you don't need to be quite so scared. I only want you to marry me. Enough women have desired that fate so that it should hardly seem so utterly dreadful.

"Indeed, I've known real ladies who would have thought such a proposal from me an honor. I'm not making the worst offer I could, you know. It's marriage—lawful, honorable marriage."

In spite of the veiled threat, she caught at the straw of hope.

"How can we be married now? If I promised you, what guarantee could you require that I would keep the promise?"

"Immediate fulfilment," he replied instantly. "Not with quite all the ceremonial even I would wish, though I care nothing for religion or its rites. We'll have the ceremonies later, if you wish.

"Unfortunately, you have spoiled the chance for the more conventional formalities. You could have had every ceremony of the church. You have driven me to fearful means.

"Don't think for a moment I'm fool enough to imagine I can hold a place at the head of this plant. I know nothing of its business; care nothing. Even robbing it would get little that I can take, except you. I intend to have you—and I want nothing more."

He paused. Her voice was hardly more than a frightened croak as she returned to her question with—

"You haven't told me yet how we could be married now."

"By mutual agreement, in the presence of witnesses. Even our state church which holds matrimony to be a sacrament acknowledges such agreement where no parish exists."

"And then, what would you do?"

"Flee. We shall have to take to the jungle within a few days—a few hours more likely."

She kept up the argument for time's sake, though she could scarce imagine what time could bring her.

"A pleasant life-prospect you offer. How far do you imagine we could get through the jungle?"

"I don't know," he said blankly. "But—life-prospect! *Dios!* What of the life prospect for me? Do you see what I am giving up for you—my career, my reputation, my very life?"

He was not pleading with her to assent to his plan. He seemed to take that for granted. He pleaded but for her regard while he put the plan into execution.

"But I don't want to give up my life-prospects—I don't want you," she argued further.

She must find out what he threatened, by what means he intended to secure her consent.

"So it seems," he said, with a return of the leering grin which had disappeared while he outlined his plan. "I think I can persuade you to reconsider your wishes in that regard."

"Never," she retorted firmly.

"No?" he mocked. "Remember, just for the moment I hold the power of life and death over you."

"Just for the moment—and forever—I infinitely prefer death to you," she answered tensely.

His face grew harder with anger.

"Perhaps," he returned. "I had taken into account that you might think so. There is also your father for you to take into consideration."

She drew a quick breath of apprehension.

"You mean that you would kill him—a helpless, sick, dying old man?" she cried.

"I mean that I will do worse than that," he whispered thickly. "Listen. I have just come from your boat. Your father is even now asking for—what do you think?"

She shuddered. She knew.

"Yes—water!" he told her.

"You fiend!" she hurled at him.

"If you like—fiend for love's sake. Believe me that, if you will. I have killed two men already, just to bring about this

present situation. I will kill fifty — a hundred—a thousand, if need be. I will torture them—I will torture your father —I will torture you. Fiend—lover!

"I have given the order. Even now two of the peons are waiting with the stretcher. I go back now. I will bring your father to this next room. He shall lie there—and he shall let you hear his cries for drink—until you have married me!"

She stared at his mad face. He was so utterly insane that his speech came in short snatches of utter fury. He panted with the strain of his wild thought.

For one moment she was on the point of bidding him bring on his witnesses. Then a doubt assailed her.

She realized that the only word she had of any extreme danger in moving her father was the word of this man. She had believed him before. She could no longer believe anything he said.

And her father had had little fever for weeks. Rarely, indeed, did he call for water through the nights. Pinhon was lying.

Yet he might be speaking the truth. Her whole life had been spent with her father, her love for him was deeper than her love for any husband would ever be.

Again she was ready to enter this dreadful half-legal marriage. Again the thought of it sent chill shudders through her weary body. It wrung from her lips a cry of agony:

"Oh, God! God!—help!"

Suddenly the flare of torches showed through the window. Loud shouts arose, and louder.

"Burn! Burn them all! Burn his bungalow, his papers! Burn the shops! *Abao! A diavolo!*"

The pale face of the crazy Indian before her lost the last vestige of its native color. A moment only he stood wavering. Then he wheeled quickly.

"I'll be back when I've attended to them," he said, as he hurried from the room.

Again she heard the lock of the door turned raspingly. A moment later bedlam seemed to break loose outside the building.

It began with the crackle of two automatics seeming to fire their charges with the rattle of machine-guns. The shrieks of wounded men drowned every other sound. Through her window she saw them fall back—the torches were hastily extinguished to afford the protection of darkness.

"Back!" Pinhon's voice was shrill with rage as he shouted the order. "Back —to the stockade—every one of you! Back—"

He but covered a hasty replacement of a magazine in one of the weapons. He let it talk for him—once, twice, thrice, it spoke its sharp word of death. Then it seemed that all the men had managed to find the cover of trees or buildings.

Pinhon came fearlessly on along that rear wall of the bungalow, his pistol waving to and fro, his lips shouting half-articulate defiance. He reached the spot opposite her window.

As he did so, he wheeled suddenly. He was just in time. A hand shot forth from the darkness behind him, a sharp stiletto aimed at his shoulders.

The pistol spoke. The dark, bare arm, with the ugly knife still gripped in its fingers, waved in a wild circle through the shaft of light from the window. It seemed as if its owner had been spun around by the force of the bullet.

The circle ended with a crash against the bars. The knife—

Evelyn Reade leaped back as it shot downward at her very feet, hurled by the force which had ended with that blow upon the irons that kept her prisoner. Then a hysterical laugh welled up within her.

She stooped, picked up the long, pointed blade, hugged it to her bosom. It was the precious answer of her frightened prayer.

Another shot—and Pinhon was stooping over the dead man, searching for the knife. The girl choked back her laugh.

He wasted but a moment. A knife was not worth his time. He had a surer, better weapon with longer reach. He stalked on after the would-be incendiaries whose mob spirit was getting ahead of his plans.

CHAPTER XV.

DESPERATE MEASURES.

TURNING her back to the window, Evelyn surreptitiously studied her newly acquired weapon of defense. It was a hideous thing to look upon; far more suggestive of murder than the tiny, deadlier automatic to which she was quite accustomed. She shuddered; was shaken suddenly with the doubt whether she could ever force herself to use it.

Then, as the doctor delayed his return, came the hope that she might never have to use it. She waited, prayed, hoped. An hour passed — between the occasional sounds of a running battle which seemed to shift to and fro at an ever-increasing distance from the bungalow, the bell of Haggins's wall-clock tolled off the hour of midnight, struck one—two—three—

Exhausted, she sat down on the floor to continue her vigil. She grew so anxious at thoughts of her father that she would have welcomed Pinhon's return. It seemed as if the suspense would provide death for her.

The clock struck four—five—

The dingy dawn of a foggy day made the trees dimly visible. The fog gave place to pouring rain. The light increased.

And now her anxiety for her father redoubled. Whatever had been the truth as to Pinhon's words, there would be no question now about her father's wish for water. She wondered if he would ever get it.

Had the peons killed the doctor? It seemed hardly likely as yet. Had they done so they would be hurrying back to carry out their threat of burning the plant.

Had they chased him into the jungle as they had chased Phillips? If so, what would they do with her and her father?

Hope died. There was no chance. There had been no chance—since Phillips basely deserted the outfit and buried himself in the jungle.

Then despair leaped into desperation. She heard a shuffling of feet in the other room—a groan.

"But my daughter," a feeble voice pleaded in English that she alone could understand. "Where is she? Eve, dear —Eve! Oh, please bring me a drink, Eve! They've jarred up the old wound and—I'm so very thirsty. Eve!—"

The lock scraped—the door opened.

It closed again, behind Pinhon.

For an instant she could scarce recognize the physician. His clothes were in tatters. His face was scratched and bleeding. One of his eyes had been blackened. His skin was as yellow parchment and hung wearily, it seemed, to his flesh.

He was tired from the long battle of the night—a battle for just supremacy enough to give him time to take away the woman of his desire. His feet dragged heavily, his shoulders drooped. He was a pitiable remnant of the fine real gentleman he had been but a few days since.

But his eyes still burned with the passion that had become a monomania. His lips drew back in the same leer.

"You hear him? Will you marry me now, or wait until he dies?"

Could she kill him—this broken wreck —with a knife? The thought set her shuddering again. It seemed the night had finished the last remnant of her nerve.

The broken wreck came toward her. Through a ripped sleeve his bare arm shone white. It had no such muscles as Haggins possessed. It had enough. In spite of his weariness, Pinhon was still strong. And his hard, smooth jaw clamped upon the indomitable purpose of an Indian.

"You hear him? Are you ready? Do I call my men? Hear him?"

"Eve! You are coming, aren't you? You aren't sick, are you, dear?"

"Hear him?" whispered the Indian, the merciless savage.

Evelyn Reade felt with her finger until the sharp point of the dagger stung through the khaki of her waist. She stepped toward the doctor.

"Yes—yes," she forced the words from her lips—"Yes, I hear him. I am ready."

He did that which she had thought he would. He sprang toward her, unable to wait for a betrothal kiss. An instant later he dropped back with a grunt that the girl would hear in nightmares for the rest of her life.

She had struck too high. He was fumbling feebly for the pistol in his belt. The blood was gushing from severed arteries under his arm.

It soiled her hands sickeningly as she snatched his pistol from him. She pointed the weapon into his face. To pull the trigger might easily seem a *coup-de-grâce* to put him out of his misery. Yet she could not bring herself to do it.

"Shoot!" he bade her feebly. Something of the old, sane, decent light seemed to come back into his face with the letting of his blood. "Shoot! I deserve it. Oh, *Dios*—what have I done?"

"Eve!" came her father's voice once more.

She flung the pistol to the floor. Pinhon had left his key in the door, turning it behind him after he had entered. A handkerchief on which she wiped the blood from her hands was dropped behind as she rushed to her father's aid.

And it seemed that all her terrible experience and the awful deed she had done was gone for naught. The watchman stood before her, between her and her father. In his hand was another pistol like the one she had foolishly discarded.

"Back!" he commanded. "Back!"

He came toward her menacingly. Instinctively she shrank before him. In another second he would have discovered what she had done to the man he acknowledged as his boss.

"Eve!" She thanked Heaven even in that moment that her father could hardly hear a word or sound of what was happening.

"Yes, father, I'm coming," she called.

But her voice was thick and weak. And the bulky man before her, a full-blooded negro from the coast, pressed her further back.

"Coming!" She wondered when. It seemed that she must be too late.

"Let her pass!" It was the voice of Pinhon. The man hardly recognized it. He pressed still further. If he had but heard before he had opportunity to see!

She was silent, hoping that Pinhon would summon strength to speak again. The burly black man shoved her to the door, back through it—

And the silence was broken. The sound that came wrung a shriek of snapping nerves from the girl's lips. The face of the man before her turned an ashy gray.

Clear and sharp in the damp air came the long-drawn toot of the company steamer's whistle.

CHAPTER XVI.

MIGHT.

MR. HAGGINS, it appears, was not quite capable of being the absolutely perfect company's man. His heart aflame with desire for a speedy marriage, he had done things which were not so unmistakably for the best interests of all concerned, as were the most of his moves.

He had developed a restored faith in Phillips's ability to handle the men as he handled them. Knowing Evelyn Reade's quick accuracy with a pistol, believing that the boat was well stocked with gasoline for an emergency, perhaps not any too anxious about what effect movement might have on her father, he had gone off when real caution would have prompted more delay.

The result was inward uneasiness, almost from the time he left the plant. By

the time the steamer had reached the junction with the Amazon, he had determined to find what he could in the small city of Manaos and return forthwith.

He got together a gang of men much smaller than he should have taken for the start on the new plant which he contemplated. He found a missionary who seemed to have very little to do. He had spent only two days thus far, and he boarded his steamer and gave the order for all speed back up the Rio Roosevelt.

The swollen condition of that river and the flood current made the ascent a matter of more time than all he had used before. Two days and three nights were gone when he found himself within a couple of hours' run of the plant—a matter of less than six miles, but against a current running as many miles an hour in the opposite direction.

His anxiety had got the best of him to a point where it had him standing in the bow of the little steamer, straining his eyes ahead long before any sight of the Gordon works or clearing could possibly be expected. Somehow he could not get over the feeling that at any turn he might catch sight of the Reade cruiser in flight down the river.

As his boat nosed its way toward the third bend from the last and began to negotiate the difficult eddy off the point, his attention was riveted upon a peculiarity of the collection of driftwood at the vortex of the whirlpool.

At first he thought the round, white thing was but some bit of floating paper from the plant above. The idea that it was a human face could be nothing but the fancy of a somewhat overwrought brain.

Suddenly the none-too-competent native wheelman lost his grip for an instant, and the vessel's bow was swept several points from its course before the regular pilot, with lurid oaths, snatched the spokes from his assistant and began the task of holding the course through the whirling currents. In that instant Haggins got a sensation as near to fright as probably ever came to him in his hard, strenuous, fearless life.

The thing *was* a face. It was turned toward the boat. Its lips were moving, though if any sound were coming from them it was drowned by the engine's throb.

It was Phillips! The realization of what that fact might signify sent Haggins's bronzed cheeks as white as those of the exhausted man in the water.

At his order, shouted in a hoarse yell, the steamer was slowed enough to hold its own and no more against the current, while a life-boat was lowered, manned, and rushed to the aid of the all but drowned manager whom Haggins had left as his successor.

Phillips could barely speak. Haggins, bending close over his lips, managed to catch:

"Revolted—I got away—lost in the jungle—caught in the whirlpool—I—"

Haggins raised his head, his face gone livid.

"You got away! You damned whelp of a cur—what did you do with Evelyn? Where is she? You—" With a string of unprintable oaths he kicked the helpless man on the deck.

Phillips winced with the pain. Half dead as he was, a flood of bitter rage arose within him.

It died again. He could not blame Haggins until he had made him understand how he had fled because no other hope offered at the moment, because it had been flight or the carcel where he could have done none of the things he had hoped to do by getting away for the time. He tried again to explain from the beginning.

"It was Pinhon—he proposed to Miss Reade and—went mad when she refused. He poisoned two of the men and made the rest believe I was feeding them poison in their mess. She—said she could take care of herself. I—started to arrest Pinhon—but he had started to arrest me first. The policemen turned on me, got my guns. They almost had me in the car-

cel when I broke away. The whole works turned out to chase me. I made the jungle—and got lost."

"Made the jungle!" still shrieked the furious lover, and added all the rough epithets of a rough, hard man. "And left her to take care of herself!"

Phillips went silent. He was too weak to quarrel, too angry to attempt any further explanation. It had not occurred to him that any one would consider him a coward for what he had done. His very run for the jungle had been at imminent risk of his life which, at least, would have been safe enough in the carcel. It had been the best that any human being could possibly do under the circumstances.

Haggins stalked off, came back to ask more questions, walked away in rage too strong even for his most violent vocabulary, then returned once more. And Phillips, his tired mind still a little in the clouds above mere personal grievances, could not help but admire the very fury of the man.

It was terrible, almost horrible, certainly awful. It was as powerful, as irresistible, as big as the man himself—the wrath of a demi-god. And there was no capacity for fear in it, save the fear for what might have happened already to others than himself.

The engine of the boat was crowded almost to the bursting of the boiler. Long before the vessel had rounded the last turn, Haggins ordered the blast of the whistle. Then he ordered it stopped, lest it use up too much steam.

When, at last, the little boat reached the dock, Haggins made a six-foot leap ashore, and had already ascertained that the cruiser was empty and stripped of everything valuable it contained before a deck-hand had thrown a rope. Then, with drawn pistols, eyes aflame, without a pause to call others to follow him, he dashed to the land, up the narrow plaza past the burned wrecks of what had cost him a year's labor and his company a million odd dollars, until he came to the bungalow.

That it was standing, its door open, had attracted his attention from the start.

He found the room empty, save for the stretcher hung between two chairs, its withered and almost lifeless burden sleeping in oblivion of all that had gone on about him. The dusky guard had peered from the window, seen the smoke of the steamer as it rounded the last turn, and run as if pursued by devils for the stockade where the whole outfit sat in council with terror-stricken faces, unable to decide whether to break for the jungle and its perils, or to stay and plead for mercy from one who had not the slightest knowledge of the word's meaning.

All thought of fight had seemingly been shaken from them. Haggins's approach had brought them to their senses.

An instant the big man stood still, debating whether to waken the frail sleeper or to pass on in further search. Then, from behind the storeroom door, which had been closed for Dr. Reade's sake, he heard the girl's voice:

"Yes, doctor, I forgive you. I think you were mad. You have been good to my father. Now—you must let me bandage—"

Haggins drew a long breath. The voice that interrupted Miss Reade's was barely audible:

"No—I wasn't even good to him. I could have had him on his feet—in a month. I—kept him sick—to keep you. No—let it bleed. I deserve to die. I—"

"Kept him sick to keep you!"

The words sent the hot blood of jealous rage to Haggins's face. He flung open the door. He saw Evelyn on her knees before the prostrate form of the native doctor, who was evidently very weak from the loss of the blood that darkened the floor. Her hands were thrown up in horror at the last revelation of the Indian's perfidy.

"You deserve to die!" Haggins uttered in a tone deep and hoarse with wrath. "And you shall!"

His automatic was pointed down at the man's breast.

But the girl's heart was tenderer. A cry, not of joy at sight of her lover, whose face then was an unlovely vision of black fury, but a cry for mercy for the other who had loved her badly but asked for pardon.

"No—Arthur—don't do that—no!" she pleaded.

"Yes, shoot," bade the wounded man. "I deserve it."

Automatically, it seemed, he moved his hand over his face and breast in the sign of the whole world's penitence. In the face of death he was again the half-civilized child at his Indian mother's knee.

"Back, Evelyn," Haggins bade her hoarsely, his strong arm pushing firmly to sweep her toward the door.

Despite her further pleadings he closed it, planted his foot firmly against it.

Then, as she still begged him not to do the thing to which his mad rage was driving him, she heard a shot—another—another—another—

Slowly, cartridge by cartridge, Haggins was emptying his pistol's magazine into the body of the man who had perished at the first crack of the weapon. Then—though she never knew this—he kicked the limp thing into a crushed heap in the corner of the room.

But she shrank back as he stalked out of the door again. The murderous passion in his face would have frightened her had she not heard the murderous shots of his pistol. He paused not for any caress of love until vengeance was done.

"Where are the rest of them?" he asked harshly.

"I don't know," she sobbed, breaking under the strain of what she had just heard and seen. "Oh, Arthur, stop. You're not yourself."

"Up at the stockade, I suppose. The dirty scoundrels are like a lot of whipped curs as soon as they know they haven't any longer a white-livered chicken to deal with. I'll teach them to mob white men, to attack white women, to burn my buildings. I'll—"

"Arthur—please—for my sake!"

"You're a woman," he said calmly. "You can't understand how to deal with savages."

He turned on his heel and hurried back down toward the dock. A half hour after she saw him returning at the head of the new gang of men, the first dozen of whom he had armed with clubs and knives. Several were provided with pistols like his own.

They marched by and on to the stockade at the head of the long plaza.

And a great fear grew up in her heart—a fear of this man whom she had promised to marry. Even now, in his terrible rage, he was magnificent. He might have been a pagan war-god.

But a husband! She shuddered. Her mind harkened swiftly back over her whole acquaintance with the man. There could be no doubt that he loved her with a masterful passion that fascinated like his overwhelming personality. But she searched in vain for a word of tenderness, an act, a look.

Once, twice, he had said things that showed he recognized softer feelings in others. He had even admitted, as a lack, his own want of them; but not as a lack he regretted. It was rather the lack of something he thought a man had better be without for the big business in hand.

And yet she feared. She wondered if she could ever herself muster courage to refuse to do his bidding when he brought on the parson and called her to stand with him to become his wedded wife.

And again the thought of Phillips arose within her. She shuddered. Phillips had proven himself a coward.

CHAPTER XVII.

MAN TO MAN.

AMONG the other "best-he-could-get" hands Haggins had picked up in Manaos was another native doctor. About the only recommendation the man had wherewith to offset the fact that his practise was nil, seemed to be his certifi-

cates of graduation from the University of Brazil's medical college. Haggins had bidden him, very ungraciously, to attend to Phillips.

He administered rather liberal stimulants. Phillips had instantly sunk into peaceful slumber. Haggins marked his contempt for his newly acquired physician as well as Phillips by leaving them both on the steamer when he marched his peons up to administer punishment to those who had again upset Phillips's régime.

Phillips was brought up wide-awake by the screams and shouts that came from the stockade. It took him a moment to realize where he was. Realization brought back the sense of responsibility.

Of the battle wherein Dr. Pinhon had killed a score of the peons and wounded as many more in driving them back to the carcel for a while, Phillips, of course, knew nothing. Of the men Haggins had brought back with him from Manaos he had seen very few.

He could reach no conclusion but that the more triumphant outcries were those of the revolting members of the gang lately his own in attack upon the ones with which Haggins might be trying to replace them.

He got to his feet unsteadily. The new doctor was at hand.

"Better lie down again," he bade.

"I must get up there," Phillips said, a trifle thickly, since the fumes of alcohol still befuddled his senses.

"Better take a little of this, then."

He produced a bottle of aromatic spirits of ammonia. Phillips's slight medical preparation for the jungle readily comprehended the value of this stimulant. He drank what the doctor poured into water in a glass.

Its effect was almost instantaneous. He walked a little giddily for the length of the wharf, then found himself almost as firm as ever. He took the rest of the distance on a run.

He had seen the burned shops. The open door of the bungalow did not attract his interest. He supposed that the Reades, if anywhere in safety, were aboard their cruiser. He reached the stockade's gate.

The lock had been broken at some point in the affray of the night, but the gate was held from within to prevent his entrance. Enough of his old strength had returned so that a single thrust brushed the small native inside from his path.

And, for the second time, he came upon a man beating a peon almost if not quite to death. The fellow, whom he did not recall having seen before, had raised his club high for a second blow upon the head of one of the natives whose arm hung limp and broken already.

Phillips barely reached the spot in time to catch the upraised arm from behind and wrench the club from the hand that held it. The man wheeled upon him, then saw that he dealt with one of the white men of the place.

"He tried to run," he seemed to regard as explanation for the maiming he had all but finished in a killing.

"Give me that pistol," Phillips commanded, seeing that the man had one.

The fellow obeyed. Then, with an injured air, he was about to follow when Haggins descended upon the scene.

"*You!*" His voice was the epitome of withering contempt set to shrieking music of rage. "What in hell are you interfering for?"

"He's killing the man," snapped Phillips.

"Get out!" snarled the more experienced boss. "I'm doing this."

As he spoke he struck Phillips an unexpected blow with the flat of his hand. It fell upon the slightly weaker and much weakened man's cheek with force enough to send him reeling backward. And, before he could recover his stunned faculties, Haggins had strode on to another part of the stockade.

No man had ever slapped Phillips before since his childhood. The insult brought utter rage. He followed, his brain a turmoil of fury, with no idea what

he would or could do, full only of mad resentment.

The man he had just disarmed, taking his cue from his master, leaped upon Phillips's back. Phillips turned, the pistol pointing from his hand, abundantly angry to shoot to kill.

He pulled the trigger, pulled it harder. The pistol had been emptied.

Phillips brought it down with a crash upon the fellow's head. Then he went on after the big boss. Haggins had seen his quarry across the stockade and had broken into a run.

And all the hot inward fury within Phillips turned to a colder, more terrible sense of amazed indignation which was ten times more furious than he could ever have conjured up over anything done to himself. A forlorn creature sat on the ground, frantically waving up and down a pair of hands whose torture seemed to madden him, while he stared at them and moaned between lips drawn in agony.

Both hands had bleeding holes through the center! The sight sickened the more as Phillips comprehended that this was the lesson one man had taken from the cheap crucifixes which the more religious of the peons wore.

For a moment he paused under the impulse to do something—anything to relieve the horrible torture of the poor victim. Then he hurried on after the man who had done the thing.

Haggins had paused but a few yards farther across the stockaded grove where a number of as yet unpunished peons huddled in terror under the clubs and menacing pistols of the newcomers. To two of these last, who were beating up a shrieking late rebel, the man of terror spoke a sharp command which Phillips was not yet near enough to hear.

The men obeyed. The victim raised one last shriek of abject terror as his arm was raised high over his head. Before Phillips could catch up, Haggins had fired his pistol at the back of the hand, the fingers of which had been vainly clutched as if to prevent a shot at the palm.

"The other!" snapped the inexorable boss, while the shriek of the victim turned to a howl of pain.

Even the lips of the captors turned white, and Haggins had to repeat the word before they lifted the second hand to receive its piercing. And Phillips reached the spot. In his heart was a rage fully as mad and murderous as that of the other.

With the emptied pistol he struck down the arm as it was raised for that second shot. Haggins had been so intent upon what he did as not to hear the swift running behind him above the groans and cries that turned the whole camp into a bedlam. He had not seen the blow that sent his shot to the ground in time to ward it off.

He wheeled about, his finger pressing the trigger again.

And his pistol was empty too. With a fearful oath he sprang to the fight, something in his enraged face showing he found more liking for the chance to beat Phillips to pulp than in any of the other murderous punishments he had inflicted.

"*You!*—you white-livered coward!" he sang between his blasphemies. And he struck as Phillips had struck, with the palm of his hand holding the otherwise useless pistol.

Phillips failed to dodge the blow. It laid his cheek open and rendered the pistol a shattered mass of broken steel and loose springs. Rocked by the terrific impact, he clinched with his adversary by instinct rather than by training, since his own size had made it difficult to find a sparring-mate for any practise in boxing in the college gymnasium.

Big and strong as he was, Haggins was bigger and stronger. The ammonia on top of the previously taken brandy made a combination of powerful stimulant; but the best of stimulated strength is unequal to the same degree of natural strength. It lacks endurance. And Haggins's first crashing blow had been a thing to take the strength away from a giant.

Haggins freed his left hand. Phillips

saw it draw back for a second upper-cut to his jaw. His senses were reeling; the one impression was that he must take the second blow, that he could not ward it off, that it would finish him.

Then the desperation of his rage returned; the bitter hate for the monster of cruelty he had learned to regard his opponent. He raised his swimming head, bent backward.

The blow but grazed his chest in its upward lift. To miss a blow is almost as hard on a big man as to take one. Phillips did not know how he took advantage of the second in which Haggins regained the perfection of his balance lost on that upward stroke. But he drove his right into the pit of the other's stomach.

Haggins was too well kept up to be knocked out by any such blow even where it struck; but it wrung a grunt from his lips. Phillips's highly stimulated senses came back enough to perceive the slight relaxation of the grip on his left arm. Some inner voice warned him that his strength would be short-lived, that he must act quickly. But the attempt to follow up with a left jab went wrong.

Haggins recovered himself, tried to strike again without breaking the clinch, landed a heavy but ineffectual blow on the flesh of Phillips's upper arm. Then he flung Phillips off. For several seconds the two giants walked around each other, as big fighters always will, each seeking opportunity to deliver a finishing smash.

The sheer rage in each man's heart could not brook much of that sort of delay. The impulse to mix things up seemed to flash on both at once, to affect them alike with utter forgetfulness of defense in attempt to hammer each other into jelly.

Twice Phillips felt the hard jaw of the other crushing the flesh of his knuckles—felt the pain of that only as joy. Thrice he landed on Haggins's chest. Once he found again the vulnerable solar plexus.

Then he realized the terrific blows he was taking in exchange. He seemed rocking back and forth, hammered from one side to the other. His feet were growing unsteady. His hands were numbing. He struck with all the might that seemed spent before he could raise his fist. He could not see where he hit. But Haggins drew back a foot or two.

Phillips managed to focus his dizzy vision. The other had but stopped to deliver the finishing blow at a groggy, helpless opponent. Feebly, Phillips raised his arms to ward it off. Then he saw something else.

Through his reeling senses broke the meaning of the swiftly closing circle of the natives about them. Raised clubs, knives, emptied revolvers were rising up.

Still the ammonia fumes assisted to clear his brain, though they could no longer lend strength to his heart or his hand. There shot through him a poignant sense of moral defeat worse than the physical knock-out which was on its way to his feebly protected face.

Haggins had been right. These men needed holding down, needed fear that amounted to terror, needed cruelty of punishment almost inhuman. They stood ever ready to take advantage of the first sign of weakness in a rod of iron.

"Look out!" he shouted.

It was the instinctive assertion of the bond which seems to hold together the Saxon type of white man against all other races of the world, which forgets its own hates and battles at sight of the first hostility of men with color in their cheeks.

Had Haggins heeded the warning he might have ducked the blow of the big club in the hands of one of the new men he had just brought with him. He went down with a sneer on his lips at what he had taken as an attempt to throw him off guard by a ruse.

His fist landed on Phillips's chin, even at that, but with the force drawn back as its owner collapsed.

Phillips ducked from the similar blow he could not doubt would be dealt him from behind. He felt himself seized, dragged back; he lost his footing, was mauled right and left, pushed, pressed.

Then suddenly, while he still waited for a blinding crash that might break his skull or mean the severence of his neck with one of the heavy machetes, he found himself outside the mêlée, thrust off, free.

A lot of his rage at Haggins had been knocked out of him in the fight; crushed out with the strength of nerve and muscle. The sight of the oncoming danger from the peons had deadened the last remnant for the moment.

Haggins's battle was his now; Haggins was being murdered; it did not occur to him that Haggins's death would not instantly be followed by his own.

He summoned his last ounces of remaining strength and plunged back into the squirming mass of half-naked human flesh and brawn. From the nearest he snatched a club which swayed in the air seeking opportunity to smite the white man without crushing one of the half-score natives in the way.

"Stop it!" he yelled hoarsely, fiercely as he could. "Stop it!" he howled, as he used the club on the nearest back.

Coming from behind them it was comparatively easy to break through the swarm. In a moment he was clutching at bare shoulders of men who were piled so heavily on the victim of their wrath that they could not do more to injure him.

Still he roared his hoarse command to desist, as he kicked, lifted, pounded the sprawling mass from Haggins's body.

And the thing he could not comprehend happened. The men who turned enraged faces upward at feeling blow or thrust or kick fell away. In a moment he had uncovered the other white man.

Strangely, incredibly, the natives were not making further efforts to leap upon the pair of them. They merely scrambled from his reach. Strangest of all, some of them were pulling others away with them, echoing his command to desist.

No explanation for this came in the words of one, as Phillips knelt and stared at the circle which had escaped his reach.

"He is dead," the man spoke to the crowd.

But Phillips, their other foe, still lived. He could not believe that they did not wish to kill him.

"He is dead!" The men chanted the words like a refrain. It was as if they spoke of a task accomplished, a work done to their complete satisfaction. It could be but half done.

And then one in the crowd, near its outer rim, but soon to be well toward the front as the throng seemed rapidly swelling to include all the men in the stockade who could walk—one added a supplementary cry to the shout of triumph.

"Haggins is dead. *Viva* Phillips!"

The last was snatched up by a dozen voices, two score, a hundred. And Phillips knew he had been touched in the brain.

It could be but a vocal echo from the old fatuous dreams experience had sent glimmering into the realm of things too good ever to be true—it could be but the hallucinations of a mind shattered by a blow or by the strain of the past hours of terror—it could not be true that native peons—these peons—should shout in almost frantically triumphant acclaim:

"*Viva* Phillips!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

TRANSITION.

BUT Haggins was not dead. The blow that had felled him had glanced a little, enough to prevent its crushing his skull. It had but stunned him completely.

And the rush of the crowd to finish the job had proven the saving of his life, since only a few minor cuts had been inflicted by those who could not strike a real blow in such a crushing push.

The noise of the shouting seemed to penetrate his oblivion. His head lifted a little from the ground, his arms moved. He lapsed almost instantly into unconsciousness; but the sight of the slight movements had been enough to stop the shouting as if it had been some vast whistle turned off by a valve.

Those nearest leaped forward, their faces dropping their smile, their eyes gleaming again with hate, their hands clenched in the desire to complete their job of murder.

And this seemed real to Phillips, the return of a momentarily lapsed consciousness on his own part.

" Back!" he shouted, seizing one of the several clubs that cluttered the spot.

But he had not to use it. The men fell back of their own accord.

" Phillips commands," spoke one. " We obey Phillips. He is our friend, our master."

And Phillips suddenly understood. They had seen his fight on their behalf. It had been such an object lesson as he might not have hoped to show in years—as he could not yet wish to have shown at all.

At last they comprehended. Already their faith in Pinhon and Pinhon's lies was shattered. Already some of the older ones and wiser had begun to suspect that they had lost in Phillips the best manager they could ever hope to serve. Now he had proven the truth of their suspicion. And he had convinced the others.

As for rebellion against all authority, they had had their fill. Most of them had been born in peonage. To serve was a natural attitude of mind, the normal manner of life.

And just as all this was dawning upon him as realizations generally dawn, instantly, in a flash of revelation—Evelyn Reade walked into their midst. Behind her trailed the new doctor. Both were laden with bandages.

" *Viva la senhorina!* " some one shouted. The cry became a new outburst of enthusiasm.

Evelyn Reade had sat in horrified terror at the sounds which succeeded Haggins's arrival in the stockade, until she had seen Phillips running toward the place. She could hardly have explained why that sight prompted her to follow. She was conscious only of an effort to comprehend how Phillips could have gone for aid instead of merely fleeing from danger, and could have got back in hardly more than twelve hours.

She had seen Phillips stop the beating up of the helpless peon inside the stockade gate. She had seen Haggins almost knock him down for the interference. She had been on the point of rushing forward for one more protest against her fiancé's brutality; but had stopped at the thought of the hopelessness of such protest. Besides that, she had caught sight of the man with the mutilated hands.

That sight had sent her scurrying back to the bungalow for bandages from the storerooms. Half-way, she had met the doctor who had followed his patient in doubt as to what might befall a man who had seemed so exhausted.

At her behest, the doctor had gone with her to help bring bandages enough for the work she knew must await in that fenced-off acre of horror.

She had got back to the stockade in time to behold Phillips, with blood streaming from his cut face, white, unsteady on his feet—plunge again into the mêlée of the savages. Not until the men had shouted the word that Haggins was dead, had she been able to guess what lay in the center of their close circle.

It no longer worried her that this news was an insufficient shock to destroy the gladness she felt in the moment's demonstration that Phillips was no coward.

Now, even as she knelt to assist the doctor in ministering to the unconscious man, her eyes flashed with something he dared not believe in, any more than he had believed a moment since in the sudden good-will of the peons. At the least it was a warm congratulation upon the " *vivas* " of the natives.

But they took it for something more. Or, perhaps, mere love having little to do with their ideas of matrimony, they thought her but the natural prize of the dominant white man. And no notion of causing embarrassment prevented them from altering the last huzzah of their volatiiely happy temperaments.

"*Viva la fazendadrina!*"—"the Mrs. Manager!" their crude Portuguese meant as plainly as anything.

A moment later the girl herself gave a possible color to their notion. The ring that Haggins had placed on her finger but a week before was a wonderful thing, picked up in some place of vast ancient lore and weird art in priceless jewelry. As she stooped, with face burning at the sound of the peons' newest shout, it accidentally scratched the hand of her fiancé when she began the chafing that should help to bring him back to consciousness.

Silently she removed the gorgeous bauble. Silently she pressed it as far as it would go over the first knuckle of the little finger of the unconscious man's left hand.

Then she began the first of those acts of mercy and aid to the injured which would stop only when she and the new doctor and the new manager had all fallen exhausted a dozen times, but had got up and gone on until the last injured man's wounds were attended—which was almost at the dawn of the following day.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE GOVERNMENT ACTS.

BUT Phillips did not yet press his suit for the girl's hand. He waited until the doubt of the success of his method was gone, until the burned shops had been rebuilt, the machinery repaired, the works settled into operation again at a rate far beyond the best Haggins had ever got from the men.

And then, when he thought the time had come, a new difficulty threatened to end not merely his chances to make Miss Evelyn Reade the queen of his jungle domain, but the domain itself.

Haggins, restored nearly to health again, but rejected of the peons, refused by the girl who had promised once but learned better, left the place in disgust.

"You'll find out where you end up with all this refined flubdub," he proclaimed. "They'll get tired of this enthusiasm stuff, tired of loving a man who insists that they keep on doing the thing they hate worst, which is work. Then you'll see how this mission-Sunday-school method will hold them."

"I wonder," Phillips turned to Evelyn as he heard this parting shot.

There were men already in the new chain-gang to bear out the prophecy. He was far from sure.

"Haggins is a wonderful man, and no inexperienced fool in this sort of thing," he went on. "I'm still willing to admit that he was a splendid disciplinarian."

The girl eyed the company steamer across the gang-plank of which Haggins had just disappeared after his warning.

"I'm afraid I can't help losing sight of his ability as a disciplinarian in the thought of what an awful husband he would have made," she confessed.

Two weeks later the blow fell. Haggins had sent in his resignation by the previous steamer a month before. He had not been above blaming Phillips for the fact that he was compelled to resign.

Now, on reaching Manaos, he telegraphed a report to the Brazilian department heads that started the military as well as the judicial officials scurrying up the river for an investigation.

Nearly thirty men killed, among them a favorably known young physician; nearly fifty more or less wounded in fighting about the works; buildings burned; a completely unauthorized system of prison labor in full swing. Haggins himself attacked in almost mortal combat, resigning because he was practically driven out—it was little wonder that they arrested Phillips immediately upon arriving, and then went on to do their investigating.

On the third day Phillips paced the cabin of the government's launch, which was the extent of liberty allowed him. For three days his head sunk steadily. Two months ago he would have been ready to choose a fair-length prison term as an excuse for giving up the job. Now he didn't want to give it up.

Though he had expended a considerable amount of his own income on schemes for improvement of the men's condition that he did not feel quite justified in charging to the company, he hardly felt safe in charging to expenses such a sum as he imagined would grease the palms and clear the minds of the officials. It was not the company's concessions but his own position and liberty that were at stake.

The length of the commission's investigation had grown ominous. Obviously they had no intention of hurrying through the sort of formal, make-believe proceeding on which a whitewashing could be based. And there were things a plenty on which serious charges could be preferred under the letter of the law. To have run such a plant at all involved the exercise of authority no state could grant to any private interest. The state's law was too remotely distant to be invoked.

Such usurping of legal functions might be generally winked at. They could easily be made cause for criminal prosecution and Heaven only knew what sort of prison term. It was bad business having a government interfere at all; the more he thought of it, the more clearly he saw that the most complaisant officials can hardly fail to see what they have spent three days looking for.

And he would be the "goat." The holding of such a position as his involved taking the responsibility for the conducting of such a plant. It was logical, inevitable—he must go.

Slowly, almost surely at last, he had been seeing the growth of the realization of his dreams. Back of the restored factory buildings three tiny houses were already building that were to be the homes of three of the best of his peons.

At one side of the stockade, turning the fenced-in spot into a sort of mission compound, a little church was erecting. By the return steamer he had expected a priest to give his community the religious touch without which any place is a mere camp.

He had come to love the peons, the grown-up children of the forest. He had hoped that their children would fill the grove with laughter as they attained some little education that would mark another upward step toward civilization in the jungle. The thing was a growing vision of what any man might view as an achievement worth a lifetime's labor.

Would another man do it? Would his successor be another Haggins, another such as were the vast majority of those who drive rather than lead, who inflict civilization's terrors with little thought whether its benefits will follow or not?

He could not bear the thought. He turned his eyes away across the river to the untrod jungle which none had ever sought to civilize or elevate.

Shod feet clattered down the wharf. He stared. The man before him was none of the commission. He was a white man—an American—arrayed in a natty Palm-beach attire—

He was Alf Netcomb!

"Well, old Grindy," this apparition cried cordially, as if he had met his former tutor on Broadway, as if he were as much at home as in his own Riverside Drive library—"you did it! I congratulate you."

"Netcomb! Where did you come from?" Phillips gasped.

"Home," laconically observed the loquacious fellow. "We got a pretty bad report from our late manager. Dad wanted to send down a committee of experts. I wouldn't let him until—I'd had a chance to see if you hadn't made good.

"Then, when I got to this God-forsaken land of bugs, I found out that the blamed government was on its way to investigate you whether I'd let it or not. So I came along with the bunch. But I didn't want to see you and act too friendly for fear I couldn't seem personally indifferent enough about our manager to be influential.

"But, say—I didn't have to do any influencing. That committee has some darned good chaps on it anyhow. Wish

I knew half what some of them know. And they've spent three days making up a report. Know what they said was the reason for the time spent?"

Phillips could only shake his head.

"They said they wanted to learn, if they could, how you'd done it. Old Orecao—he's the real learned doctor of the outfit—says he's been in plants in all the places where every prospect pleases and only man is vile, and this one's got 'em all shaded. He's going to recommend to the government two more visits here after you've got your scheme worked out a little further."

"But—but the charges?"

"Say, Grindy—they're going to charge you with heroism. Ain't it awful? Gee! I don't know. It's the first place I ever saw over three miles from Broadway where I could even think of living. But it's no use for me. You're already engaged to the chief attraction."

"No—not yet," Phillips answered.

"*Not yet!*" echoed Netcomb merrily. "For the love of Mike don't tell any of the commission. They've called you wise in two spots in their report. They'll get you yet for criminal neglect of opportunity."

But they didn't. Phillips turned again to meet them as they came down the pier, bowing, smiling, apologizing for having inconvenienced him, congratulating, praising enough to have turned an older and wiser head than his. And as for criminal neglect—

Well, if this gets dramatized into a movie, it will end up with the usual pretty scene before the altar. That priest came along all right six weeks ago; and they got around the difficulties of religious differences with him somehow. Those three little shacks of the peons aren't going to be the only homes at the Gordon town by any means.

THE END.

Just for That

by

Leigh Gordon Giltner

"IT'S a bit rough," mused Holt, his eyes fixed speculatively on the vivid scene before him. "It's a bit rough on a chap to have no one to bid him good-by and God-speed and weep down his neck and urge him to write and not to take rash chances or drink unboiled water or forget to read the Testament that was his mother's—"

"It *is* rough," agreed a voice.

Holt started as he turned his eyes on the speaker, a slender girl close beside him; he was not aware that he had spoken aloud.

"You see, I know. I don't belong, either."

The face under the pert little hat was piquant rather than pretty, but it spoke, as did the slim figure it surmounted, of youth at its freshest and freest. Holt's interest was aroused.

"Oh, there's some mistake," he smiled, with an appraising glance too flattering to seem impertinent, "there must be a soldier lover or at least a cousin or brother whom you've come to bid good-by—"

"And God-speed," appended the girl demurely, "and weep down his neck and urge him to write and not take rash chances or drink unboiled water or forget to read the Testament that was his mother's. Nope. There isn't a soul. I'm here professionally."

The youth in khaki stared.

"Professionally?" he echoed.

"Yes. I'm 'Doris Dean.' Thank Heaven it isn't my own name—wished on me by the city editor, passed along by my predecessor in office." Then, as she caught the uncomprehending stare in his eyes, "You don't know me? Never heard of Doris Dean of *The Morning Intelligencer?* Such is fame!"

"I—I don't seem to recall—" stammered the boy.

"Don't worry," she counseled cheerily, "lots of others in the same boat. I'm here to write up the departure of the 'bold sojer boys' for Fort Shelton. Got to get a good feature story out of it—sob stuff, tremolo stop, and all that, you know. If you'll read the *Intelligencer* to-morrow you'll see. Captions like this: 'Gray-Haired Mother Gives Only Son to Country'; 'Bride of Week Bids Soldier Bridegroom Good-by'; maybe you'll even figure in it yourself as 'Lorn Lad in Khaki. None to Bid Him God-Speed as He Starts for Border.'"

Holt was surveying her keenly as she spoke. Around them on all sides surged the crowd—officers in uniform, and the rank and file in khaki; wives, sweethearts, children, sisters, friends, there for a final glimpse of the troops ordered to the concentration camp and thence to the front.

Each intent upon his own concerns, no one heeded Holt and the girl, who though in the midst of a close-packed throng, were practically as effectually isolated as if on a desert island.

"I wonder," Holt said slowly, his eyes on the girl's face, "if you're as callous as you sound?"

The vivid face sobered.

"No," she said, "I'm not. That is, I wasn't. It's cultivated. When I first went on the *Intelligencer* — uncle's pull landed the place for me—they made me sob-sister to start with. Heaven knows why! I had to visit sick seamstresses in stifling tenements, abused orphans in the slum districts, mothers of criminal sons and suicide daughters, deserted wives with starving children—oh, I tell you it takes it out of one, that sort of thing! I cried pretty steadily the first six weeks—regular *Niobe* stunt—let my sympathies run away with me. Then I saw it wouldn't do; I'd have to pull up. So I said to myself: 'Buck up, Ellen'—"

"Ellen?" her auditor interrupted, "I like that—loads better than the Doris Dean stuff. Doris suggests cheap novels and chorus ladies."

"It's my own name at any rate," pursued the girl. "But, as I was saying, I told myself I'd be a fit subject for Matteawan if I went on wailing over things I couldn't help, so I hardened my heart, took a stronger grip on myself, and now—"

"Now?"

"Now I laugh instead of crying. I've trained myself to see the humor of pretty much everything—except—" with an involuntary shudder, "except death. Dad and mother both died, you see. That's why I'm Doris Dean of the *Intelligencer*, instead of a normal girl."

"And you're able to find something humorous in this?" Holt made a comprehensive gesture toward the piteous little groups all about them—weeping wives, clinging children, awkward, embarrassed men, striving to cover their emotion with an effect of swagger and bravado—truly little enough that was mirth-provoking in the scene.

"Lots of it!" the girl answered quickly. "Look at that chesty young squab—lieutenant, is he?—so puffed up with a little brief authority that he's fairly popping out of his uniform. See that blushing damsel fighting back her tears 'cause they'd make her complexion come off. And that raw recruit at your right with—"

"Yes, I know," said the boy. "But suppose—I'm not pulling out the tremolo stop, you know—but suppose, after all, we're sent on to the border? *Suppose we don't come back?* Suppose we're snuffed out, the lot of us, comic-opera lieutenant, raw recruits and all."

"I've supposed all that—and more besides," she said quietly. "Don't you know that a woman can conjure up more frightful fancies in one sleepless hour than a man would think of in a year? But what can we do about it? What good would it do for the lot of us to make a noise like a tribe of howling dervishes? Do you really think it would cheer you chaps up for your journey to the turbulent border if we wept and wailed in concert?"

"I don't know," mused the boy wistfully. "Somehow I think it might. One wouldn't feel quite so God-forsaken and forlorn starting off for he doesn't know where or what, if he felt that some one cared."

"Where's your mother?" the girl asked abruptly.

"Dead these ten years. And I'm an only son."

"Your father?"

The boy's face darkened and hardened a little.

"Haven't any. Quite on my own, you see. Not even a second cousin or an aunt-by-marriage to see me off."

"That's straight? You aren't stalling? You're really quite alone?"

"Absolutely. There's no one to shed a tear—"

"Down your neck?" she threw in.

"Or wish me luck," he went on quietly, "or to care if they make me food for powder—or the crows; no one to send me a message or a letter, or even — why, you're crying!"

"I'm not," protested the girl indignantly. "It's just the dust and the glare—I forgot my sunshade—" But meanwhile she was rummaging desperately but vainly in her hand-bag for her handkerchief.

"Take mine," said Holt, and pressed it into her hand. There was nothing for it but to accept the big, fresh linen square he proffered, since the tears were trickling unrestrainedly down her nose.

"Thanks," she said, dabbing her eyes disgustedly. "Thought I'd ceased to 'emote'—except to order. But nerves and a sympathetic spirit—" Then she smiled. "There! You can't say now that no one has shed a tear—"

"Down my neck?" he interpolated.

"My humble tribute," she hurried on, "if it's worth anything to you."

"It is," he said. "I'm grateful no end."

"Don't mention it."

He moved a trifle nearer.

"I wonder," he said slowly. "I wonder if you'd mind for the few minutes we've left—it's just a little while; the train's past due — pretending that — that— Couldn't you, wouldn't you, Doris—no, Ellen; that's better! Couldn't you just pretend for say five minutes that you're here to see me off; that you're my—"

"Sister, for instance? Or second cousin?"

"Sweetheart, please. Of course you don't know me, never saw me before, and probably never will again. But—won't you, Ellen? It can't hurt you to be kind

to a 'lorn lad in khaki'; maybe some day you'll be glad to remember that you were. My name's Howard Holt. I won't ask yours; I promise you I won't ever try to find out if you'll—"

"What is it you want me to do?" a low voice queried.

"Why," smiled the boy, "just make a fuss over me—all women know how it's done. Just pretend I'm the man you care for, and that you're giving me to your country's service, and that maybe—just maybe, you know—I'll not come back. Though I think I ought to tell you I haven't an idea we'll ever see Mexico or get nearer the border than Fort Shelton. It's just a preparedness stunt, I think, though one never can tell. But—all the same, won't you, Ellen?"

The girl glanced swiftly and cautiously about her. No one paid them the slightest heed.

"Yes," she said, almost inaudibly, "if it will make you feel less like a homeless dog—"

Suddenly her hands were gripped in two strong brown ones; she felt herself being drawn irresistibly toward a tan flannel shirt, with the second button of which her eyes were just on a level. She did not resist—that button seemed to exercise a singular hypnotic effect — even when the harsh fabric grazed her cheek and an arm about her shoulders pressed her closer to its rough surface.

She felt dazed and queer and helpless —a pawn in the hands of fate. She had come out, cockily confident, to view the scene of many partings, quite impersonally and unemotionally, except for professional purposes; and here, instead of making copy of the occasion, she was recklessly mixing in and even playing a leading part.

To her horror and dismay, she found she was taking her rôle seriously. There was a lump in her throat and a suffocating feeling like a weight on her chest. And all for a man whom she had never seen till an hour earlier, and whom she might never see again.

"Ellen," she heard him say; "dear little Ellen, you won't forget?"

Ellen played up.

"Never," she half sobbed. "And you'll write, won't you? And not take chances or forget to read your Testament—"

"'Fraid I haven't one."

"Then—" A long-drawn whistle sounded far up the track. An important personage in uniform hurried by with a sharp:

"Join your company, Holt!"

Instinctively, as the moment of parting approached, Ellen clung to the tall youth, whose arms as instinctively tightened about her until their pressure quite cut off her air supply. There was a tense moment of silence. Then she felt his breath on her cheek.

"Ellen," a pleading voice whispered in her ear, "Ellen—just once, for good-by!"

Ellen Hibbard was a well-trained, well-mannered, discreet young woman, despite the fact that her newspaper experience had given her what she called "a line on life." But suddenly discretion and training fell from her like an outworn garment.

She found herself obediently lifting her small, flushed face to the handsome dark one bent above it. Their lips met and clung in a long, close kiss, rather tender than impassioned.

Then, with a breathless "Oh!" she drew herself away and straightened the pert little hat.

The train thundered down upon them. Where confusion had reigned supreme, military discipline now prevailed and triumphed. The central figures of clinging groups detached themselves to become units in a compact, orderly formation, alertly awaiting orders.

As the sharp rasp of the commandant's voice fell upon his ear, Holt caught the girl in his arms again, held her to him hard, crushed his lips on hers for a long moment—and was gone.

She saw him melt into the mass, then

the whole scene before her blurred in an iridescent mist of tears. The band was blaring "The Girl I Left Behind Me"; the men were entraining, and a weeping chorus filled the background, but Ellen's alert senses were not, as usual, on the job.

"I'll have to fake my copy," the ruling passion asserted itself after a moment. "I haven't a single note!"

Suddenly she heard her name spoken and glanced up to see Holt leaning from the nearest car-window. Keenly conscious of her tear-stained face, she drew closer.

"'By, dear," she heard Holt say tenderly, under his breath. "I'll think of you night and day. You won't forget me?"

"Not for a moment," she promised. And she kept her word.

As Holt glanced at the *Intelligencer* next morning he guessed why Ellen had "had the sob-stunt wished on her." Her "story" was admirably done. There was no conscious, deliberate attempt at pathos; the situation was not overplayed or overwritten; instead, there was a simple, straightforward setting forth of facts, with a sympathy, sureness, and sincerity of touch that somehow appealed. It wasn't at all the typical sob-story, but nevertheless it brought a lump to the reader's throat and a sudden mist to the eyes.

"She knows how to write, bless her!" Holt conceded. "Here's hoping she'll write to me!"

At about the same moment, Ellen, at her desk in her scrap of an office off the *Intelligencer's* composing-room, was reading a penciled scrawl addressed to "Miss Doris Dean, in care of *Morning Intelligencer.*"

It began:

DEAR:

I'm afraid you're already beginning to regret your kindly impulse of this afternoon. Don't! You wouldn't if you guessed what it meant to me. I was desperate enough for anything as I stood there alone waiting for the train—and you sent me away with a song in my heart, bless you!

I promised I'd not try to discover your true identity and I won't, without your permission. But you surely won't mind my writing to "Doris Dean." Doesn't she furnish advice to the love-lorn. I'm all of that! "I'm in love, dear Miss Dean" (that the proper way to do it?) "with a young lady I've seen but once. To be quite frank, I fear she doesn't reciprocate. What should you advise me to do? Please answer in your very next issue."

Seriously, I was bluer than the Mediterranean when you chanced along. I'd quarreled with dad, who positively forbade my joining the cadet corps from the State university where I graduated. I stood for it till my twenty-first birthday arrived (a week ago), and celebrated by telling him, respectfully but firmly, that I meant to go to the front. He came back with the ultimatum that if I went, I was no son of his. Nevertheless, as you know, I did it. So that's why I was a lone, lorn rookie when you happened to see and feel sorry for me.

It mayn't be strictly conventional, but—won't you waive ceremony and write me now and then? I'll be pretty desolate, I fancy, and you can serve your country by boosting the spirits of an insignificant atom of the National Defense. I haven't gone in much for society since my college days. I've been slavishly busy learning to be dad's understudy in the business, and I don't know many girls. But if I weren't afraid of sounding like a topical song or a Laura Jean Libbey hero, I'd say that there's just one girl in the world for me.

Pardon me if, like *Romeo,* I'm "too sudden-bold," and, in sweet charity's name, send me a line to say you'll forgive—and not forget,

Yours most gratefully,
HOWARD HOLT.

For a long time Ellen sat very still, her eyes fixed alternately on the letter before her and a folded square of linen beside it monogramed with an intricate "H. D. H."

"I sha'n't answer it," she decided presently—Ellen was a person of quick decisions. "I think it's straight—it must be—about the name. He looked honest, and he's evidently young, but 'I never believe 'em,' as the *Girl from Utah* sang, and he may have a wife and a cherub or

two. So I'd best stay out. Sorry I forgot his handkerchief. I'll send it on—no, I'll keep it to chasten my scorn next time a love-sick flapper writes for advice. What would they think—the silly girls who ask Doris Dean's counsel—if they knew? Lucky thing they don't! Well, here endeth the first lesson." And with set lips she tore the letter to infinitesimal bits.

Another letter, a second, a third, and a fourth shared the same fate. Ellen resolutely clung to her resolve of silence, even when the papers, which she read with feverish interest, told her that Holt's company had been ordered to the front.

"Because I've made a fool of myself once — Heaven knows what possessed me!" she mused, "is no reason why I should make it a continuous performance."

None the less, she had noted with a thrill that, owing to the rejection of two superior officers on account of physical disability, one Sergeant Hereward Holt ("Print-mistake for Howard, of course," she decided) had been promoted to a first lieutenancy.

"Nothing particularly praiseworthy about that!" she scoffed. "Just happens to be a big, splendid, healthy animal, that's all."

Yet she thrilled, in spite of herself, at the thought of his superb height, his sheer physical perfection, his wonderful strength—which she could attest.

"Ellen Hibbard," she lectured severely, her face aflame, "I'm ashamed of you! You're sillier than the silliest 'chicken' that ever told her woes to a soulless pencil-pusher. You'll be writing to 'Beatrice Baldwin' next, or dropping into love lyrics in the local dailies. What's the matter with you anyway? You used to have some sense."

Still she followed, with breathless interest, every mention of the troops at the front. Instead of the fashion and society notes, she perused with vivid eagerness every line relating to the men on the border, though she would not for a moment admit, even to herself, the real reason for her interest.

Then, one day, along the wires flashed the essence of tragedy, grim and dark; deadly, blasting, devastating tragedy, treading hard on the heels of comedy and mirth.

With white face and gasping breath, Ellen read the meager details. A little band of men, cut off, by a treacherous ruse, from their fellows, surrounded by an overpowering hostile force, fighting against incredible odds, holding out valiantly till their ammunition was exhausted. Then the bald statement that, among others, the gallant young commanding officer, First Lieutenant Hereward Holt, was killed, leaped at her from the printed page and smote her like a brutal blow in the face.

The little room grew very still. An impertinent small desk-clock ticked noisily, but the battered typewriter was silent, and the pencil and pad on the desk beside it lay idle.

Ellen sat quite motionless. There seemed no occasion to rise; no use to go on with her work; no incentive to get through with the dull, daily routine. Nothing mattered. Holt was dead.

Somehow that put a period to everything; there was a dreadful finality about the announcement from which there was no appeal.

Presently she took up the paper again and forced herself to read the details. Holt had proved himself a hero, something more than a big, splendid, healthy animal, there was no doubt of that. She read on, white-lipped, dry-eyed, hardly sensing the details she could not seem to grasp until a single paragraph flashed upon her consciousness like an illuminated leader on the screen:

> Mrs. Holt, at San Antone, to be near her soldier husband, was prostrated at news of Lieutenant Holt's death.

Ellen laid down the paper quite quietly. Her face was gray. Automatically

she opened her desk, took from some inner recess a folded, monogramed linen square, savagely tore it into minute shreds and ruthlessly tossed it into the waste-basket.

Then she turned to her typewriter, inserted a blank sheet of paper and began her "story" for the next edition.

II.

ELLEN HIBBARD was a sane, sensible, admirably poised young woman. She went on with her work as usual; she showed no outward sign of any devastating inward shock or later process of readjustment; she laughed and jested with the office force and harried the newest reporter as always; yet the keen-eyed city editor, less the automaton and more the human than others of his ilk, noted a difference.

The fresh color was less bright, the young cheek thinner; the gay laugh and the ready humor less spontaneous. Often he noted that the girl's eyes looked tired and older than her years warranted. But being a wise man in his way, he said nothing.

Ellen no longer read the papers; she shrank from them as one who had been tortured might shrink from sight of the rack.

She knew nothing of the progress of events on the border, except as she perforce heard fragmentary discussion at her boarding-house, at the office, or on the cars as she went to and from her work. She had no desire to be further informed, she told herself bitterly, of the devastating grief of Mrs. Hereward Holt for her dead hero.

"Hero!" she said fiercely. "Hero? A cad and a liar— No, I suppose it was quite legitimate from the man's point of view. No doubt a silly, fresh young flapper who wished herself upon him seemed fair game. I suppose he wasn't to blame —yet I wish he'd been different—and decent— He didn't look the cad—"

She gazed unseeingly out of the car window. She had had a busy day at the office and was very tired. And she was going home to a dismal boarding-house, where groups of noisy young drug-clerks, salesladies, and stenographers shrieked, and sung, and danced, and flirted in the parlor and halls, and where, even in the seclusion of one's own dingy second-floor back bedroom, peace and quiet were not to be found.

"Great about that young Holt, wasn't it?" she heard the man in the seat back of hers say to a companion.

The companion grunted.

"Must be kin to the young lieutenant who died so gamely last month. Wonderful how this chap ever made his escape, and more wonderful how he ever got through, with a wounded companion on his hands. They say he carried—or dragged him—half the way."

"Gritty youngster!" the other man commented. "Seems his father—David J. Holt, of the Holt-Helgar Arms and Ammunition Company—know him, don't you?—objected to his son's being made a target for the product his farm manufactures. Refused to let him go with the cadet corps, so when he came of age, the lad enlisted as a private in the regular army. I fancy this wins him his chevrons—"

Ellen left the car and bought a paper at a street news-stand. She did not know what she hoped—or feared—to find.

With shaking hands she opened the sheet to discover on the first page a condensed account of what had evidently been elaborated in the morning papers—the escape of Privates Howard Holt and James M. Evans, of the First Cavalry, who while doing picket duty had been captured and carried off into the Mexican wilds.

She was trembling so she could scarcely see the headlines, which danced frantically before her.

In her own room at the boarding-house she locked the door, spread the page before her, and hungrily read every word of the account.

Holt was alive! That thought sang in

her heart and tingled through her veins like wine. Did anything else matter? She only admitted that something did when she grasped the fact that Private Howard D. Holt, aged twenty-one, Company F, First Cavalry, son of David Jayne Holt, of the Holt-Helgar Mfg. Co., was unmarried.

"He didn't lie to me! It was all straight—what he told me!" was ringing in the girl's brain as she read the brief account extracted from Holt (who had shied at "singing of arms and the hero" —in the first person singular) of his wanderings after he had made his escape from the Mexican camp and started across an unfamiliar hostile region for his own.

With wet lashes she read how, half-starved, tattered, exhausted, yet game, he had straggled into camp, dragging his comrade, and resisted, with what strength remained to him, being cast for the rôle of military hero.

"It's all right," she heard herself saying over and over again, half sobbing, half laughing, "he's alive and—he didn't lie!"

III.

Some one entered the tiny office where Doris Dean sat day in and day out, writing her screed and dealing out sage counsel to trusting maidens who sought her advice in the conduct of their heart affairs.

Doris was so busy with a paragraph that insisted upon getting tangled that she did not look up, continuing to pound her long-suffering machine with a vicious thump. The color and light had come back to her face and her eyes were bright once more.

"I may never see him again," she told herself each morning, "but at least it's a comfort to know that the man I made an idiot of myself over is a decent sort. And he's alive, alive!"

He was, indeed, very much alive, and at the moment rather ill at ease. Had she lifted her eyes from her copy she would have noted that Holt, a trifle thinner and paler than when she had seen him last, was standing close beside her, his splendid bulk crowding the little room absurdly.

"I beg your pardon," he finally ventured, after waiting in vain for her to turn. "Sorry to interrupt your train of thought, but I—"

It was a tribute to Ellen's nerves and training that she neither screamed nor fainted when she lifted her eyes and saw close beside her the man she had mourned as dead. Instead, after a moment, she got to her feet and held out a comradely hand —a trifle unsteady, to be sure, but cordial and welcoming.

"'See the conquering hero!'" she said. "Won't you sit down, or do you prefer a pedestal?"

The boy flushed hotly.

"Oh, cut that!" he begged. "I'm sick of the stuff. The newspapers made a lot out of nothing, and everybody, even dad—"

"Your father's forgiven you?" She had recovered her poise, though her face was still a little white.

"Killed the fatted chicken, so to speak. Burned up the wires when he heard I'd disappeared, and came out in person determined to bring home what was left of me when I turned up like the bad penny I am."

"I'm glad," she said gently. "I congratulate you. You're home on sick leave?"

He nodded.

"Look the invalid, don't I?" he laughed; "but dad seemed to think I was unfit for service, and he somehow convinced Uncle Sam that my valuable aid could be dispensed with temporarily, especially since the 'war-cloud' has about disappeared. We got in this afternoon at four. I took dad to the office and came straight here. I couldn't help it, Ellen, really I couldn't. I hope you don't mind?"

"No," Ellen answered, "I—I'm rather glad."

"You didn't answer my letters, Ellen," he reproached her. "Why, please?"

"I don't quite know. Partly, perhaps, because I was ashamed—"

Holt's fine eyes kindled.

"Ashamed? You never did a finer, sweeter, or more womanly thing in your life than when you sent a miserable, reckless, desperate poor devil of a soldier lad away with the feeling that some one cared. Dear, your face was before me every moment of that wretched hike through hostile regions. I thought of you day and night, and if the Mexs had done for me, I'd have gone out of life with your name on my lips—by the bye, just what *is* your name, Ellen—the rest of it, I mean?"

"Ellen Lloyd Hibbard," she informed him smilingly. "And speaking of names, the Lieutenant Hereward Holt who was killed—?"

Holt laughed.

"You confused me with him? So did lots of others. Gallant chap!"—his face sobered a little. "Met death as an officer and gentleman should. But he wasn't even a connection of mine, I'm sorry to say."

"I thought—" Ellen began and stopped.

"I see! You thought I was a benedick—and incidentally a liar and a cad. I can't wonder you didn't write, if you could believe that of me!"

"It wasn't that," she protested; "at first I was ashamed—and uncertain—and later I thought you were dead." The shudder that shook her slim form was illuminative. "And when I learned that Howard Holt was alive, and—pardon!—a hero, I did write. I told you I'd done you an injustice, and that I was sorry and ashamed. Perhaps they'll forward my letter from the border—"

"I'll wire 'em they'd better, if they don't," he smiled. "I've waited a long time for that letter, and it's due me, if I have to upset the entire service to get it."

"It wasn't much of a letter," she confessed, "but I was remorseful at having doubted you—"

"Then you don't any longer? You trust me fully?"

"Well—within certain limits," she conceded.

"Then you'll believe me when I tell you again that I've thought of nothing but you since we parted. You were with me like a visible presence when I looked death in the face—death in a mighty unpleasant form it promised to be; and I somehow had the feeling—foolish, you'll say—that it was you who guided me back to camp. Ellen, I know this sounds like Davis melodrama or magazine-story gush, but—it's straight. If you'll give me a chance to prove—"

"All right, Miss Hibbard," an inky copy-boy looked in to observe.

Ellen picked up a sheaf of typed matter and put it in his hand, flushing at sight of the wise, old grin on his weazened face, as he knowingly eyed her visitor.

"I'm through for the day," she sighed with an air of relief. "Suppose we get out into the open. I've sweltered here since nine."

"My car's down-stairs," he said. "We'll have dinner somewhere together—"

Ellen shook her head decidedly.

"We won't," she said positively; "it wouldn't be fair to your father on your first evening here. You must take me home."

"All right," he smiled, "there are other evenings—to-morrow evening, for instance. We'll celebrate then. Now we'll take a little run and then—"

"Home," repeated Ellen, with Spartan firmness. She mentioned the address.

"Just a tiny spin first," he insisted with equal firmness, "and then I'll take you home. Get you there by six-thirty at latest. But," he added significantly, as the powerful car shot forward, "I warn you, Ellen, that some day pretty soon I mean to take you home—for keeps—with me!"

Side-Tracked at Green Gap

by Marie B. Schrader

A TWO-PART STORY—PART ONE.

CHAPTER I.

THE VERDICT.

"THE only thing that can save you is a long stay at Hot Springs, Arkansas."

The words fell in distinct tones in the quiet room.

The speaker pronounced them with the unhesitating courage of a person who has the strength of his convictions.

He looked directly into the eyes of one of the two men facing him.

What a contrast between them!

One was of average height, robustly built, with a square jaw betokening determination, a pair of quick, discerning eyes, and a general air of knowing what he was about.

The other was tall, of slender figure, with a pale complexion and delicate features. His face narrowed down to a small chin, and his chest seemed lost between his bent shoulders.

"But, doctor—" began the tall young man.

"There can be no 'buts' in this case," interrupted Dr. Fleming with emphasis.

Evidently the young man addressed possessed nerve, for to dare question the opinion of so famous a physician as Fleming was unheard of. There was one thing in particular upon which Fleming prided himself, and that was the fact that his patients accepted his verdicts without a murmur no matter what the cost.

Cost in this instance was in itself of little concern to Harvey Bowyer, clubman and several times millionaire. The doctor couldn't understand why he interposed that "but."

"But, doctor," continued Bowyer persistently, "the whole thing is impossible."

The speaker fingered a monogramed handkerchief of finest linen in nervous anxiety.

Dr. Fleming eyed him coldly, professionally.

"May I ask, then, why you have taken up my time and seriously interfered with my day's routine by sending for me to come here when I should be attending to patients who really need my services?" The doctor spoke with an angry gleam in his eye.

"I—I had no idea you would tell me

to go away," replied Bowyer in faltering tones.

"What did you think I would tell you?" asked the physician sarcastically. "Did you expect me to assure you that you are the picture of health? Did you expect me to insist upon your continuing your present mode of existence?"

"But I lead merely the normal life," protested Harvey, pulling nervously at his mustache.

Fleming threw him a cold glance.

"You call Wall Street, clubs, theaters, all night entertainments a normal life?" he asked.

"Why, what else could a fellow do?" helplessly inquired the other.

Fleming looked in despair at the second man.

"If you were of the same physique as your brother here," he said, after a moment's hesitation, "things might be different."

"I don't do any more than James does," persisted Harvey.

"Yes, but can't you see, man, that your brother James is an entirely different proposition from yourself physically?"

Harvey shook his head.

"Why, James and I have always gone to clubs and all the rest of it," he answered.

"James can stand it. You can't, that's all." The doctor was beginning to lose patience.

"But I can't go away just now," continued Harvey. "I don't want to."

"Ah! That's it," exclaimed the doctor in triumph. "You 'don't want to.' That's the secret. It isn't so much that you can't, but it doesn't please you to do so. When will you millionaires learn that you can't always do exactly as you please —not when the Creator takes a hand?"

Dr. Fleming had become almost a millionaire himself. From a poor, unknown boy he had worked his way into success. He possessed no awe of the wealthy classes, and so was able frequently to speak in terms which would not have been tolerated from another physician.

He now moved toward the door.

"You're not going, doctor?" asked Harvey.

"I have no time to waste," briefly replied the physician. "If you don't go to Hot Springs, as I have ordered, you will be a dead man in less than six months. Look at your eyes, your sunken cheeks, your wasted form. You think it quite the thing, I suppose, to look thin and miserable now since that seems to be the style. And you won't seek health because 'you don't want to,'" he concluded. "Bah! I have no patience with you!"

"My brother prefers to remain at home because he feels that he should manage affairs himself. He is the elder and by rights should be the head of the house," explained James, who had been a quiet listener to the conversation.

"But you attended to all that before, didn't you?" asked the doctor.

"Yes," he replied, "until Harvey decided he would take a hand and run things."

"He's been running them badly enough," remarked the doctor. "If he continues as he has begun he will run both himself and his business into the grave."

"Why, doctor—" began Harvey.

"Oh, I know what they say in Wall Street," continued the physician. "You are about as competent a manager as—as—well, never mind what. You would have done well to let your brother here continue as manager. He was making a success of things."

Once more he started toward the door.

"Good day, gentlemen," he said. "When next you send an urgent call for me I'll take my own time about responding."

The two brothers looked at each other.

"But, really, doctor, he can't leave just now," said James.

The doctor looked keenly at him.

"No, I can't," added Harvey.

James's face brightened.

"You see," he said with a half smile, "we can't spare Harvey. That's the

truth. Harvey knows that his departure just now would upset things dreadfully. I expect to go away at the end of the week and there will be no one left. One of the other must remain. Of course, if Harvey insists upon leaving—why—"

"Oh, no, old chap," interposed Harvey. "I wouldn't interfere with your little trip for anything. Such a jolly party going, too. Wish I might be along, but business—"

"See here, Mr. Bowyer," broke in the doctor, earnestly looking from one to the other and speaking in a serious tone, "you treat this matter lightly. It is nothing to laugh about. No matter what your plans or your brother's may be, nothing should interfere with your immediate departure for the West. You have no time to lose. This is a question of life or death. I am sorry you did not send for me sooner. I had no idea you were in so bad shape," he added gravely.

At last his words impressed his patient.

"You mean it!" exclaimed Harvey. "Am—am I really going to die?"

"Not if you follow orders," answered the physician. "Hot Springs is not such a bad place. You can have a very pleasant time there, and will find any number of persons from your own social circle who are taking time by the forelock and fitting themselves for a few more sparring rounds with gaiety."

With a hopeless glance in the direction of James, who preserved an inscrutable expression, Harvey said slowly:

"Well, doctor, if you insist, I suppose I must."

"Really, Mr. Bowyer, one would think that you were conferring a great favor on me by consenting to save your own life," and the doctor's mouth relaxed in a dry smile.

"By the way, when shall I start?" inquired Harvey. "Next week or the week after?"

"You must leave to-morrow," said Fleming.

"To-morrow—?" began the other, but a look from the physician silenced him.

"All right, then," he added. "By the way, can't you go with me, doctor?"

"Impossible. I can't leave just now."

"Not for"— Harvey mentioned a sum of money which almost took the physician's breath, accustomed as he was to large amounts.

"Well, since you insist," he said with a smile.

"I will order my private car to be in readiness," went on Harvey. "We can take that early afternoon train."

The doctor left to make his own preparations for the unexpected journey.

"So you are really going," began James.

"There's nothing else to do," rejoined Harvey. "I'm sorry about your trip, old chap. But I really don't want to die just yet. Come, cheer up. Don't look so downhearted about it. One would think me about to pass in my checks."

But James's face did not lose its expression of dejection.

The Japanese valet entered the library at this moment in answer to a ring.

"Now, Suka, get a hustle on you," commanded Harvey. "Have all my things ready for my private car. Be sure you don't forget anything."

The Jap showed no surprise.

"We go where?" he asked in even tones.

"To Hot Springs, Arkansas," answered Harvey. "It's a long trip, and we shall be gone a long time."

The next day the evening papers contained long accounts of the hasty departure of Mr. Harvey Bowyer and retinue, and all sorts of speculations as to the reason except the correct one were indulged in.

CHAPTER II.

THE CONSPIRACY.

AT the termination of the consultation with Dr. Fleming James Bowyer went directly to his office.

His manner was decidedly preoccupied, and his employees were unable to extract

anything more than the gruffest of answers to the simplest questions.

Bowyer gave orders that he would see no one for the remainder of the day unless the caller were one of his most intimate friends. The ultimatum which Fleming had laid down for his brother had upset him greatly, but not in the way which any one would naturally suppose.

Harvey had attributed his dejection to fraternal affection.

And James did not endeavor to disabuse his mind of this opinion.

James was fond of Harvey in a way, but that way was one which did not interfere with his ambition, for James's consuming passion was a desire to tower above his fellows. He felt that he would sacrifice anything which dared place itself between him and his struggle for power.

Torn with conflicting emotions, he paced up and down his private office. Outside the office-boy and the telephone-girl exchanged knowing glances.

"Glad I don't have to be in there," remarked the boy. "He's not the easy mark that Mr. Harvey is."

"He makes you jump, that's sure," answered the telephone-girl. "I just wish somebody would come along that he didn't want to see and you had to tell him. Ha, ha! You'd get all that's coming to you."

At this point the door opened and a rather dissipated young man entered.

"Mr. Bowyer in?" he asked in a nonchalant manner.

"Which Mr. Bowyer?" inquired the boy.

"Don't try that on me. You know the one I mean?"

"Mr. Harvey Bowyer is not here, and Mr. James is not in," replied the office boy.

"I see," said the visitor, not at all perturbed. "Take my card in at once to Mr. James Bowyer, and tell him that I shall await his convenience."

There was nothing for the boy to do but to follow instructions. He did so in fear and trembling.

A timid knock at the door brought a gruff:

"Come in."

James Bowyer stopped in his promenade as he observed the bit of white pasteboard.

"Didn't I tell you?" he demanded. "I'm not in."

"I know, sir, but the gentleman—"

By this time Bowyer had read the card.

His face brightened.

"Show Mr. Barton in at once," he commanded.

When the caller appeared he was greeted with the utmost cordiality.

"My dear Chester," said James, "of all people in the world, you are the one I most wanted to see."

"Well, if your office-boy had had his way you wouldn't have had the pleasure," replied Barton. "Why didn't you leave word to admit me?"

"Because I never thought of you as a solution to my trouble until this very moment," answered Bowyer.

"Trouble?"

"Yes. All kinds of trouble, worse luck."

"Come, tell me all about it, old chap. Maybe I can help you. Have stocks gone down? I never knew you to be so upset."

"It isn't stocks," groaned Bowyer. "I only wish it were."

"Maybe Miss—"

"No, nothing like that. It's my brother."

"Your brother!" exclaimed Barton. "He's been making a fool of himself again, I suppose, trying to show the world how badly he can manage the estate. How much has he managed to sink this time?"

"Oh, it isn't the money part that worries me. If he would only keep on at that a little longer, everything would come out all right for all of us."

"But I don't understand. All along

you have been complaining of his wretched management of affairs. And now you speak of his continuing to do just that as if it were your greatest wish."

"It is," answered James.

"But you must have changed your mind very suddenly."

"I have," said James. "See here, Chester, you and I have been friends too long to have any secrets at this late day. You know that I have always loved my brother."

"I knew that you did love him until he took that freaky notion to run things," observed Barton. "He's about as fit to manage big affairs as a cat. Every one is laughing at him. He believes he is making a great success of it, too."

"And no one can tell him to the contrary," said James. "Now, I am the one to run this estate."

"There is no doubt on that score," replied Barton. "You had demonstrated that before Harvey got active."

"Chester," said James, stopping in his pacings and looking his friend straight in the eye, "my brother has been ordered by Dr. Fleming to leave the city to-morrow afternoon for a long stay."

"You don't say!" cried Barton. "Fleming is playing right into your hands."

"How do you figure that out?" asked James quickly.

"Because, of course, Harvey will be unable to run things while he is away, and you can get back your old job again."

"You're all wrong. Harvey's absence is the very worst thing that could happen to me. Fleming gave us to understand very plainly that he is on the verge of galloping consumption!"

"Then he won't live long," observed Barton easily.

"Not if he remains in town," said James with significance.

"Ah!" exclaimed the other with a deep breath of understanding. "So in order to live—"

"And also to manage the estate—" interrupted James.

—"he is going away to—"

"To Hot Springs, Arkansas, where he will stay until he gets well and strong; then he will return and take up the management once more."

"I see," said Barton.

"The doctor says there is absolutely no hope for him unless he leaves at once. Business and social duties will kill him in six months or less."

"He does look wretched, come to think of it," was Barton's comment. "And he is going to follow the doctor's orders?"

"Yes. At first he didn't want to, but that old Fleming has a way of convincing people. Harvey is busy getting his car ready now. They leave at one to-morrow afternoon. The doctor goes with him. It's an absolutely sure cure under such circumstances."

"What are you going to do?" asked Barton.

"That's just it. I have thought and thought until I'm dizzy, but I have not been able to hatch out a scheme that will prevent him from going. By the way, did you have anything particular on hand when you called?"

"Nothing, except that I am on the lookout for money. I've got to get some, somehow. I lost a fortune last night at cards. I thought you could help me out by suggesting a plan."

"Ha, ha! That's good," laughed James. "The idea of my helping you to plan. I tell you what I'll do. You find a way to keep Harvey from—"

"From getting well and strong again?" struck in Barton suggestively.

"You do put things so bluntly," objected James. "Why not say, 'From leaving town'?"

"What's the use of beating around the bush?"

"Well, keep him at home and I will give you enough money to enable you to lose a few more fortunes at cards," said James. "But take care that he is not hurt in any way. Just get him to stay at home."

"When does the train leave?"

"At one o'clock to-morrow afternoon."

Barton thought hard for a moment.

"Hot Springs," he said. "Let me see —I have it!" he exclaimed, springing from his chair. "The train passes through—"

He paused impressively and gave James a knowing wink.

"Don't worry," he said, as he reached for his hat and cane. "Green Gap's the answer."

CHAPTER III.

ARRIVING AT GREEN GAP.

THE next morning the handsome house on the avenue was the scene of unusual activity. The chief heir to the Bowyer millions was going away for a long stay, and his return was problematical.

The news had got about the place and caused considerable anxiety among the servants, who were by no means sure of Mr. James's temper. Mr. Harvey they considered easy-going, and likely to let them do pretty much as they pleased rather than bother about anything; but the younger brother was a different proposition.

Directly after breakfast, which was served at twelve o'clock, Harvey, accompanied by Suka, jumped into his big automobile and was driven to the station.

The appearance of the Bowyer car caused quite a buzz of interest as it drew up in front of the entrance.

"That's Bowyer, the young millionaire," remarked one bystander to another.

"Humph! You'd never know it from his looks," returned the other. "He seems just like other people."

Once inside, Harvey despatched Suka to attend to the luggage while he made some inquiries in regard to his private car. Finding that it was in place and ready for occupancy, he began looking about for his brother.

James had volunteered to attend to all business matters for Harvey that morning, and agreed to join him in ample time to say good-by at the station.

It lacked only a few minutes of the hour of departure when James made his appearance.

"Sorry, old chap," he said; "but it couldn't be helped. You see, I've sort of lost my knack for running things since you took hold."

"Nonsense," rejoined Harvey, "nothing of the sort. You were born to the business, James. I wasn't. I prefer the artistic side of life to the grind; but I feel it is my duty to look after affairs, even if they don't appeal particularly to me. I am the head of the house, and what will people think of me if I let you run things? They will imagine that I am not capable of direction, or that I haven't the interest. Now, I am just as much concerned in our business matters as you are, only I would much rather have you manage them."

"Then why don't you let me do it, Harvey?" asked James.

"Because I feel it is my duty as the eldest to devote myself to the work," replied Harvey.

"Then you fully intend when you return to get back into harness?" There was an anxious note in James's voice.

"Oh, yes, indeed. I think Dr. Fleming has rather exaggerated my condition. A short rest will probably put me on my feet again. Then I'll make a bee-line for home and relieve you of all responsibility."

"That's awfully good of you, Harvey." But there was not the slightest enthusiasm in James's voice.

Had Harvey showed any signs of resigning his chosen position as director of affairs, James might, at the last moment, have weakened in regard to his resolution, formed the day before under the connivance of Chester Barton. As it was, Harvey sealed his own fate.

The words "Green Gap" kept singing in James's ears. His conscience smote him as he noted how unsuspicious his brother was; but he smothered it and tried to appear as light-hearted as usual.

Suka now came up, and the two brothers made their way to the gate.

"Just two minutes, sir," the conductor reminded Harvey.

"Well, I guess there isn't much more to say," he remarked. "No need of instructing you about anything, James. But there is one thing, old chap, I do want to say. Take a bit of advice from me about Chester Barton. I heard at the club last night that he is in bad financially and has done several things lately that weren't as square as they might be. I know you have always thought a whole lot of him; but I would be on the lookout, if I were you."

James's face turned red.

"I don't think he is quite up to your standard, Jimmy," continued Harvey, "and if you are seen much with him, it—it might reflect on you. I heard a number of things which I haven't time to tell you just now."

"Thanks, old chap." But James's tones were more or less muffled.

"Oh, that's all right and don't think me a meddler, will you?"

"Of course not."

"All aboard!" called the conductor.

"By-by, Jimmy."

But for the moment James did not seem to hear him. His attention was fastened on some one or something farther down the platform.

Harvey, who was standing at the top step of his car, wondered what it was that could absorb his brother's interest so completely.

"Some girl," he decided, as he caught James's eye at last.

The brothers waved their hands to each other, or at least Harvey did. James appeared to do so, but in reality he was exchanging signals with Chester Barton, who had remained discreetly within the Pullman adjoining the private car until he thought it safe to look out. He did so, just in time to see James, who had been anxiously watching for him. With a sigh of relief, the younger brother left the station, and returned to his office.

Harvey entered the car. Suka came forward.

"Everything alle right?" he asked.

"Very good, Suka. Tell my *chef* I want him."

"Well, well, sir I go," and the Jap noiselessly stole away.

At this moment Harvey caught sight of Dr. Fleming.

"Good afternoon, doctor," he said. "It's awfully good of you to drop all your other patients in order to look after me."

"Not at all, not at all," was the gruff response. "I am not sure you will be glad you persuaded me to come with you, for I am not going to permit you to do as you like, by any means."

Harvey looked at him in surprise. For the first time he began to realize that his trip to Hot Springs would not be a pleasure jaunt.

Just then Suka entered, accompanied by a portly Frenchman.

"Good morning, Duchene," said Harvey carelessly. "And what am I going to have for dinner to-night? Have you got everything I like on board?"

"Oh, *oui, monsieur,* everyzink. And for to-night I haf prepair one dinner such as you haf nevair had before."

"Ah, that sounds good, doesn't it, doctor?"

But Fleming made no reply. Harvey did not notice his silence, however, and continued in a bantering voice to the *chef:*

"I'll wager it's sweetbreads and mushrooms and—"

The Frenchman smiled with satisfaction.

"*Monsieur* is so clever," he said; "but *monsieur* haf found dat I know exactly wat he like bes'."

Here Dr. Fleming took a hand.

"None of that, Bowyer," he cut in.

"I beg pardon?" said Harvey in surprise.

"I mean that you can't have sweetbreads and mushrooms and all the rest of it," said the doctor. "You've got to live the simple life from now on. This is not Sherry's nor the club, nor your own home. You're completely at my mercy," he added with a laugh. "After a simple meal, you will retire early."

Harvey looked at him in astonishment.

"Mr. Bowyer will have two chops,

some rice, a glass of milk, and a jelly for dessert," said Fleming to the *chef*.

Harvey groaned at the loss of his favorite dishes. But he could not go against the doctor's orders.

As for the *chef*, he departed in ill-concealed disgust.

In the mean time Chester Barton sat comfortably in the smoking compartment of the Pullman adjoining, and waited for time to help him carry out his well-laid plans.

"It can't fail," he muttered to himself with a smile of satisfaction.

"Who's in the private car?" he asked the conductor.

"Mr. Harvey Bowyer, his doctor, his *chef*, and his valet," replied that official.

"Good," commented Barton.

"I beg your pardon, sir; do you happen to know Mr. Bowyer?" asked the conductor with keen interest.

"Oh, no," replied Barton hastily, resuming the perusal of his paper. "I—I've heard of him."

Night came on, and the simple dinner ordered by Dr. Fleming was served and eaten. Harvey didn't have much appetite for chops at seven-thirty, especially when accompanied by a glass of milk. Champagne would have made things a bit more palatable, but Fleming would have none of it, so the spoiled millionaire was forced to eat his "farmhouse meal," as he termed it, while his physician consumed the *chef's* dainties.

"I think it is time for you to retire," ordered Dr. Fleming soon after dinner.

"But, doctor, I really can't sleep at so ridiculous an hour," protested Harvey.

"Go to bed just the same," insisted Fleming.

Harvey called for Suka and retired.

He closed his eyes, but was just as wide awake as if it were morning. The hours dragged slowly by.

In desperation at last Harvey determined to read a while. He pressed the button which summoned Suka. Then he looked at his watch. It was nearly one o'clock.

"Where are we, Suka?" he asked the Jap.

"I think we near some place called Green Gap," replied the valet, consulting the time-table.

CHAPTER IV.

LEFT IN THE DARK.

"I NEVER heard of a place called Green Gap," said Bowyer without showing any great amount of interest.

The Jap shook his head to signify that he knew nothing of it either.

"I wonder why we are going so slowly," continued Bowyer.

"That's because we among mountains," explained the Jap.

"I see," said Harvey. "All right, Suka, you may go."

"Mistah Bowyer no sleep?" asked the valet in solicitous tones.

"I haven't closed my eyes," replied Harvey.

"Well, well, better luck nex' time," and with this Suka departed.

Soon after Harvey slept. The train puffed its way up the mountain side with difficulty.

It seemed to bend every energy until it could call forth no more. At last it stood still and thus remained.

Harvey suddenly sprang from his bed with the consciousness that something was wrong.

Standing, dazed with slumber, in the doorway he listened.

Not a sound. He fancied he could hear his watch ticking in his coat-pocket.

What did the stillness mean?

Every heart-beat seemed to ask this question.

Animals are ever alert to danger. Supernervous persons are much the same. Harvey experienced an apprehension such as he had never known in all his life before.

From his cradle up he had been petted and watched over with such careful attention that he had but to express a wish

and it was granted. Such a thing as planning for himself was an unknown factor in his experience.

Throwing his dressing-gown around him he rushed out into the car.

"Suka! Suka!" he cried

But no response came. What did it mean?

He searched for the electric button. But in his nervousness he could not remember where it was located.

The car was pitch dark. Not a ray from anywhere came to aid him. Stumbling against objects as he moved he at last reached Suka.

In the darkness he touched the Jap's hair of a bristlelike stiffness not to be mistaken for that of Dr. Fleming.

"Suka, Suka," he cried. "For God's sake, what's the matter?"

"What matter, Mr. Bowyer?" asked the valet jumping to his feet. "I beg pardon, sir, I guess me very sleepy. I guess me oversleep. Time for shave?"

"No, no, Suka," replied Bowyer impatiently. "Get up. There's something wrong."

"Something wrong!" repeated the Jap. "Oh, Mr. Bowyer, you jus' dream in your sleep. Everything alle rite."

"I tell you there's trouble somewhere," insisted Bowyer. "I fear there's been an accident."

The Jap, now thoroughly aroused, was on his feet in an instant.

"You go and find Dr. Fleming and the *chef*," ordered Bowyer. "I—I can't," he added with a shiver. "I fear the worst," he explained, "and I don't want to look at them."

"Oh, they alle rite," said Suka.

But Bowyer shook his head in the darkness.

"We would have heard from them by now, if they had been," he said. "Go find out, Suka. It is all so black."

"We soon have light," was the Jap's cheerful comment.

"I can't find the switch," said Bowyer helplessly.

"Me know where it is. You wait one second, one minute, me fix everything so to please you, and then you laugh, you laugh because you have been scared."

"I hope so," said Bowyer. "But where is the doctor?"

"Oh, he jus' snore," replied the Jap.

"I don't hear him," said Harvey.

The two listened intently, but not a sound came to break the fearful silence that prevailed all around.

"Hurry, Suka," ordered Bowyer, "Turn on the lights. I can't bear this suspense. I must know the worst."

Suka felt his way about the car, and Harvey knew that he was trying to operate the switch. But no result came from his efforts.

No one but a person who has experienced a similar predicament can understand the feeling occasioned by total darkness, utter silence and a complete ignorance of one's whereabouts.

"Me vary sorry, sir, but there is no lights," announced Suka regretfully. "Me turn switch and nothing happen."

"Oh!" groaned Harvey. "I knew it."

"I have idea," cried Suka triumphantly. "I get pocket electric light from Mr. Bowyer's room."

"Of course! Why didn't I think of that before?" said Harvey as Suka ran down the car.

In an instant he reappeared with the torch.

"Now we find the doctor and the *chef*," he declared.

Followed closely by Bowyer he made his way about.

Not an object had been disturbed.

By the aid of the pocket-light they went from one end of the car to the other.

Dr. Fleming had vanished as completely as if he had never been. The *chef*, too, was nowhere to be found.

Suka opened wide his small, almond shaped eyes as he flashed his light on all sides.

After a moment's hesitation Bowyer threw himself into a rage such as the valet had never witnessed during his long employment with him.

"What does this mean??" he cried. "How dare they leave me like this without one word of explanation?"

"Me no know," replied Suka. "Velle strange."

"The strangest part of the whole affair," went on Harvey, "is the fact that I didn't hear a sound to make me suspicious that anything unusual was going on."

He ran up a window shade. Inky blackness rewarded him.

Evidently they were in the midst of nowhere.

"I wonder if we somewhere near dat place I read — Green Gap," ventured Suka.

"Green Gap, nothing," replied Harvey. "It looks to me as if we were miles from civilization. There would be a distant light somewhere if we weren't."

"Well, well," suggested Suka. "I think best thing to do is Mr. Bowyer get dressed."

"Bully idea," exclaimed Harvey as he glanced at his present attire. "Get my things quickly, Suka."

The valet hustled about and soon assisted his master into his street clothes.

"By the way," said Harvey, stopping suddenly as he was about to put on his coat. "What about my valuables? Suppose I had been robbed! That would account for everything."

The two made a hasty search, but found that everything was in its accustomed place.

The young millionaire possessed all sorts of expensive trinkets, besides a big roll of bills such as no self respecting highwayman would spurn.

"It wasn't robbery," asserted Bowyer in tones of conviction. "What was it then?"

He thought for a moment.

"Come, Suka," he said. "Bring the light. We will go outside and see why we are at a standstill."

"But, Mistah Bowyer. Be careful," pleaded the Jap. "Do not go. Maybe you get kill."

"Nonsense," replied Bowyer bravely. "I'm going to solve this mystery even if I do get killed."

CHAPTER V.

WORSE, AND MORE OF IT.

CAUTIOUSLY the millionaire, followed by his valet, made his way to the outer door.

Suka carried the light, which fortunately for them had had its battery replenished just prior to starting on the trip. Without its aid they would have been compelled to wait until morning before making an investigation.

Bowyer looked at his watch. It was nearly three o'clock.

"It won't be long until daylight," he muttered with some satisfaction.

"Now let's have the light, Suka," he ordered when he had reached the vestibule leading to the next car.

"Why, it's gone!" he added in amazement.

"Who gone?" asked Suka.

"The rest of the train."

The valet laughed good-naturedly.

"Oh, don't you worry, Mistah Bowyer," he advised. "They not gone. Tha's jus' one leetle joke."

"What do you mean, Suka?" demanded Harvey, a faint hope beginning to stir within his breast.

"Jus' one leetle joke," repeated the valet.

"It doesn't look much like a joke to me," said Harvey.

"Haven't you seen the train when it leave and then it come back, puff, puff, and catch on again, an' off we all go?"

"Oh, no, Suka," said Harvey. "I know what you mean. But it isn't so in this case. They've left us here for good. Come to think of it we must have been standing here for a long time. It was on account of the noise of the train that I was unable to sleep. So, I suppose that I did at last get to sleep just about the time we stopped. That accounts for it.

Heaven only knows how long we have been standing in this place."

"You think so?" asked the Jap.

"I know so! I have traveled too much in my own car. Why the railroad officials wouldn't dare leave me like this without some explanation. What? Harvey Bowyer? I guess not. There's something wrong. They have had lots of time in which to shift and reattach my car again if that were the answer."

The Jap's face fell.

"We'll go outside and look around," announced Bowyer.

After some little difficulty they succeeded in lifting the platform covering the steps down which they crept to the ground.

All around was inky blackness. Not a sound except that made by the breathing of the two men.

"By Jove, Suka, this is spooky," muttered Harvey.

"You velle rite," replied the Jap. "Velle much spooky."

Guided by their little light they walked all around the car.

Half fearing an attack from somewhere Bowyer moved cautiously. But no bold man with a black mask appeared. The only sound was the rustling of the tree branches on the mountain-side.

Further inspection brought out the fact that the car was standing on a side track.

"Well, we're in no danger of an immediate collision from other trains," remarked Bowyer with a sigh of relief. "That's one thing to the good."

He examined the tracks of the siding and noticed that they bore signs of having been little used.

"Suka, what on earth are we going to do? Where do you suppose Dr. Fleming and Duchene can be? I can understand how my car might get left for a while, but the disappearance of these two men is a mystery for which I cannot account."

Suka shook his head.

"Me no understand," he said. "No answer. No reason why. Jus' before I go asleep, after I say good night to you, I take one peep at the doctor and the *chef*. Both sound asleep. I see them. I hear them. Then I, too, I go asleep. Me very tired. Me sleep sound, so sound, me hear nothing until you shake me hard. Then grand surprise. Me much surprise as you, Mistah Bowyer. No understand."

"I see," said Bowyer.

He realized that his valet knew nothing more than he had told, for he had always found Suka truthful.

He soon decided that little could be gained by staying where they were. Besides, he was of too nervous and impatient a nature to sit quietly down and await results.

"Come, Suka," he said.

"What we do, Mistah Bowyer?" asked the Jap.

"I don't know, only we are going somewhere."

"Better not, Mistah Bowyer. Better wait here."

A sudden inspiration seized the Jap.

"'Cause maybe they come back soon, quick for us," he said.

"Then they can hunt for us, that's all."

The keen air of the mountain seemed to put new life into Harvey's veins, and he felt ready for adventure. He was ready for anybody or anything that dared attack him.

The Jap, too, plucked up courage upon seeing his master assert himself.

"Ha, ha!. Tha's good joke. They hav nize time look for us if we go 'way."

"Come along. It can't be very far to some kind of a cabin," went on his master. "We'll take a chance, anyhow. At least we can get some information as to where we are, for I haven't the slightest idea."

"All I know is Green Gap," said Suka.

"That's what you told me when you left me for the night," said Harvey.

"Which way we go?" asked the Jap. "Right or left?"

"Since the right takes us down the mountain, suppose we go that way," said Bowyer. "I'm not anxious to climb up."

He didn't stop to think that in order to return he would be compelled to climb.

So down the mountain, winding about its side, they went. Their tiny electric torch threw so circumscribed a radiance that they were obliged to proceed carefully not knowing what another step might bring. They walked along the railroad-ties, as there was no path to follow.

Harvey strained his eyes in the darkness, looking for a distant light until he imagined he saw several of them, only to be set right by Suka.

After some minutes' walking they found that the side-track led them back to the main one.

"Well, that's something to be thankful for," remarked Harvey cheerfully. "We can hail a train."

Suka gave vent to an expression of disbelief.

"You think train stop for us?" he asked. "No."

They had not proceeded very far when a low rumble was heard.

"What's that?" asked Harvey. "It sounded like thunder."

The next instant his query was answered by a vivid flash of lightning, accompanied by a terrific thunderclap.

"It's going to rain," he exclaimed. "What shall we do, Suka? We mustn't get wet."

"Most nize thing to do—go back to car," Suka suggested.

"I guess you're right, but I'm afraid we won't be able to make it."

However, they started to retrace their steps.

"We have time," said Suka, scanning the heavens at the next flash of lightning. "Storm not so very near."

They pushed on and were congratulating themselves that the rain had not begun as yet, when both were startled by an unexpected sight.

A great glare illuminated the darkness.

Flames leaped upward in the distance bringing into distinct outline the stranded Pullman.

"Why, it's my own car!" exclaimed Bowyer in consternation. "It is burning up, and here we are, helpless."

CHAPTER VI.

FATE STILL PURSUES.

THE two men stood as if rooted to the spot, gazing at the appalling sight.

The flames mounted higher as they absorbed all the fuel within reach.

It was a scene never to be forgotten, for out of the impenetrable night had come light, but such light as the onlookers shuddered to contemplate.

"It's a good thing the doctor and Duchene aren't there, Suka," observed Harvey.

"It's good thing we not in car," added the Jap. "We might burn alive."

The fire speedily burnt itself out.

"She go down," remarked Suka. "What we do now?"

At times this Japanese placidity was exceedingly irritating to Harvey, but just then he found it refreshing. He himself was so nervous and excited that he needed a companion of opposite emotions.

"I don't know what on earth we *are* going to do, Suka," he replied. "Was any other man ever in such a position? Here we are, apparently miles from civilization, my car burned to the wheels, and a thunderstorm approaching. It's awful!"

"Only one thing to do," said the Jap.

"What's that?"

"Find house quick before rain come."

Harvey was fast losing patience.

"A tree will be about the nearest approach to shelter we will find this night, Suka," he said. "Haven't we been all around here and not a sign of a habitation can we discover!"

"But Mr. Bowyer cannot stay outdoors all night," objected the Jap.

"Oh, I suppose it will be the death of me," replied Harvey. "However, that won't matter very much, I guess. Nobody will worry—except my brother James, perhaps."

The Jap looked sharply at him, but he could not see his face.

"Mr. James—he very smart man," he said by way of comment.

"Yes, much smarter than I am, Suka," replied Harvey. "I wish I had acted on his suggestion and stayed at home."

Suka made no comment. He had his own opinion of James, whom he disliked instinctively.

"Oh, why did I come!" went on Harvey. "Why didn't I have sense enough to stay and die in my comfortable home instead of coming out here to starve."

Suka tried to console him.

"Come, Mr. Bowyer," he said, gently touching his hand, "come! We hope things not so bad as seem. We can't stay here. We must look for place to sleep."

"Sleep!" exclaimed Harvey. "I feel as if I could never sleep again as long as I live."

"Cheer up," advised Suka, "we not yet all dead."

Despite his gloomy feelings, Harvey could not restrain a laugh at the valet's quaint way of expressing himself.

Suka pulled him away from the railroad track and led him toward the woods.

"Where are we going, Suka?" asked Bowyer. "What's the use in quitting the railroad?"

"You see," replied the Jap, using his electric light freely until he singled out a spot which seemed likely to afford shelter. A big rock protected by a huge tree appeared like a friend waiting to welcome them.

"I will have to rest," said Harvey.

"You sleep, Mr. Bowyer," suggested the Jap.

"No, but I can at least rest."

"Is Mr. Bowyer afraid?" asked the valet.

"Not afraid; just deucedly uncomfortable," pettishly replied the heir to millions. "I suppose, though, I might as well die here as any other place. Fate has ordered a plot against me. That's plain enough."

"If Mr. Bowyer not afraid—"

"Look here, Suka, what do you take me for—a coward?" angrily demanded Harvey.

"Begging your pardon, Mr. Bowyer, but I will go see what I can see," evaded the Jap.

"All right, Suka. Go on. I'll wait here."

"If it rain, you are protected a leetle bit. You get not so much wet."

"But you will get wet, Suka."

"Oh, me! Me no matter. I no care," replied the Jap. "Me come back soon with good news."

The next instant he was off and Harvey was left alone, a prey to bitter thoughts.

Suka disappeared in the darkness, but he had not gone far before he stopped short.

"Let me see," he mused. "Which way. This or that?"

Finally he chose a different course from the one they had taken before. On in the darkness he walked, stumbling against trees and rocks, but following the tracks as closely as possible.

His feet were beginning to tire of the tramp when his light suddenly revealed a dark object ahead.

Suka muttered something in Japanese which would be equivalent to an American "hurrah."

His search was at an end. For there stood a rough log cabin.

"Mr. Bowyer, he will be glad," he said as an examination of the interior revealed the fact that it was dry, although bare of furnishings. "He not die now."

His good memory and powers of observation led him back to the rock where he had left his master.

As the twigs crackled under his feet Harvey called out in apprehension:

"Who's there?"

"Jus' me, Mr. Bowyer," replied the Jap. "I hav' such good luck. I hav' found the house. We go at once—lose no time, 'cause I think storm really come quick now."

He merely mentioned the storm to spur Harvey on, for he knew that his master

was not accustomed to walking, and the distance to the hut was by no means short.

"You're a good boy, Suka," said the millionaire gratefully as he followed his guide. "I'll raise your wages if we ever get back home."

On and on they went until Harvey was ready to drop from the unusual exercise. His feet seemed like lead.

"Here we are arrived," announced Suka at last as he pushed open the door of the rough cabin.

He stepped aside for his master to enter, and in doing so his right foot went down in a small hole. This threw him to the ground, and in trying to save himself from the fall he put out his right arm. His hand bent beneath his weight, and on attempting to rise he felt such keen pain that, stoic as he was, he could not restrain an exclamation.

"What's the matter, Suka?" asked Harvey.

"I think I break my hand," said Suka, endeavoring to gain control over the anguish as he followed his master inside.

"Here, let's see what is the matter," said Bowyer, flashing the light on Suka.

A careful examination showed that the valet had sprained his wrist which had come in for the brunt of the fall.

"What an unfortunate thing!" exclaimed Harvey, looking about him helplessly.

"Oh, don't you care, Mr. Bowyer," said Suka. "Him might be much, much worse. Me think hand broke, but it only wrist. Oh, so much easier! Me glad."

Harvey failed to see cause for much rejoicing, but he finally figured it out that matters might be worse. A "broken hand," as Suka described it, was a far more serious thing than a sprained wrist.

Harvey was glad for Suka's sake as well as for his own that the injury was no more complicated, for he had no idea what he would have done had there been broken bones to be set.

"It's too bad, Suka," he said. "Now you won't be able to do anything at all."

"Oh, you think so?" exclaimed the valet. "You watch me. Me do great deal with other hand."

He tried to lift his right one, but let it drop with an exclamation of pain which he found it impossible to suppress.

"We must fix your wrist immediately," said Bowyer.

"Yes, but how?" asked Suka. "We have nothing to fix with. Only thing to do, jus' grin and be happy."

Harvey laughed. He couldn't help it. And in doing so, he was amazed at himself.

Time and time again his friends and associates went to the greatest trouble to concoct funny stories with which to entertain him, and they did not bring forth so much as a smile. But here was the simple Jap who, despite all sorts of difficulties and adverse conditions, caused him actually to laugh.

"Mr. Bowyer laugh. Suka glad," commented the Jap. "Me no laugh jus' now—but later on, I hope."

"I hope so," said Harvey. "I trust we shall all laugh later on," he added. "But we must bandage your wrist, Suka!"

A sudden inspiration seized him. He reached in his pocket and brought forth two fine linen handkerchiefs.

"The very thing!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, no," protested Suka. "Mr. Bowyer will need them. He hav' no other."

"Oh, bosh! What do I care," rejoined the millionaire. "Here, I'll tear off a piece of one and use that as a handkerchief. The rest will serve for bandages."

Harvey smiled to himself as the thought of his friends at home came to him. If they could have seen him at that moment, carefully putting aside a fragment of an expensive handkerchief as he prepared to bandage his valet's arm! Harvey Bowyer, who had never bothered about anybody or anything!

Conditions were all changed. He wondered if he were not dreaming. And he tried to think what the other fellows would have done in a similar position.

Harvey realized that Suka was no longer his valet, but a human being like himself entitled to consideration. Of the two he decided that Suka was in reality the leader of the expedition. What would become of him if anything happened to Suka, was a thought which he would not permit to annoy him.

Having never in his life bandaged anything except stocks, Harvey was rather clumsy in his attempts, but at last the task was completed in some sort of fashion.

"There!" he cried, proud of his work. "If I do say so myself, Suka, that's rather well done for an amateur."

"Very fine, Mr. Bowyer," assented the Jap.

"You mustn't use your right hand at all," cautioned Bowyer. "When you need it, just call on me."

"Oh, thanks, so much," said the Jap, pleased beyond expression at his master's consideration.

"It's very cold here," suggested Harvey.

"We look around, see what we can find." Suka took the light in his left hand and began to explore the corners of the cabin.

"Some wood here," he reported, coming back with a few sticks.

Fortunately Harvey had his match-safe with him, and it was not long before a fire was started.

"What a bully blaze!" exclaimed the millionaire. "I didn't know an open fire could be so cheerful. I shall have them put in all my rooms when I get back home."

The thought of home caused him to reflect.

"I wonder if we ever *will* get back, Suka," he said.

"W'at! Mr. Bowyer not go to Hot Springs?" asked the Jap in astonishment.

If James Bowyer had been present just then a smile of satisfaction would have spread over his face at his brother's reply.

"Hot Springs," repeated Harvey. "Don't ever mention that place to me again. I wouldn't go there for all the money in the world."

"But—but Mr. Bowyer was not to go for money. It was to get well," Suka reminded him.

"Then I'll never get well," declared Harvey emphatically. "If I'm going to die I'll die anyhow, and what difference does it make to any one?"

"Oh, Mr. Bowyer, I would be very, very sorryful," said the Jap, who during the last few hours had learned to adore his master with a doglike affection. His little act of kindness in bandaging the wrist had won him over completely.

"Oh, yes, perhaps you would," said Harvey. "But the fact remains, if I am going to die it might as well be soon as late, and I'd rather die in my own home than in that lonely spot called Hot Springs where I would have Fleming dictating to me that I must eat chops for dinner and drink milk. Ugh!"

Suka shook his head.

"Bad plan for Mr. Bowyer to return to the city," he muttered.

"Well, back we go as soon as we can get there," Harvey insisted. "In the mean time, I think I will lie down."

"But there is no bed," cried Suka, horror-stricken at the idea of his master being compelled to sleep on the ground. "If Mr. Bowyer no object," he added, taking off his coat and spreading it out.

"Thank you, Suka," said Harvey gratefully, as he added his own for a pillow. "But what will you do?"

"Oh, me. No matter. Me used to hardship."

Harvey lay down again, and, like a faithful dog, Suka stretched himself near the door where he could hear the slightest noise.

Soon both men were sound asleep.

How long they slept neither knew, for both were dead to the world. The burning fire and the delayed thunder-storm were both alike forgotten, together with other more remote troubles.

Suddenly, as if by magic, Suka rose to his feet.

Harvey awoke at the same time.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Me no know," replied Suka.

"Lie down, then, Suka."

But the valet did not obey. Instead he rushed to the door and threw it open.

In an instant the interior of the cabin was filled with smoke.

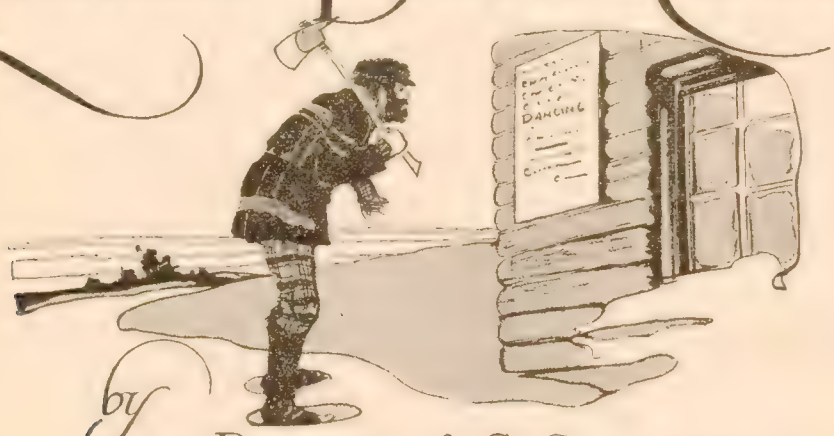
Horror-stricken, the two gazed at each other. The Jap was the first to come to his senses.

"Come, quick, Mistah Bowyer," he pleaded. "The woods are on fire."

Harvey took one look at the wall of flame sweeping rapidly toward them, and then the two ran for their lives.

(*To be concluded next month.*)

Ladies Don't Count



by Raymond S. Spears

POSTERS in black, red, and blue ink, measuring three by four feet, announced a Grand New Year's Ball at Flansburg, close by the Little Black Creek log-camp in which Red Hamblin worked. Music, it was stated, would be by the Jeff Wilkins Orchestra. Bill Bright would be floor-manager. All were invited.

The timekeeper brought one of the posters from the Northwood post-office and nailed it to the board wall in the lobby of the log-camp where the crew, coming in from hauling the timber to the dump, would observe it without fail.

It was dark when the men came in from the skidways, winter roads and dumps. It had been a long, hard day, with roads slumping and alternate periods of heavy lugging and then standing around in the raw chill to await the return of the slow-poking teams, of which there were too few for the bad going on that job. The men were in a correspondingly ugly mood.

When they arrived in camp Red Hamblin was in the lead. As Red opened the door the man behind him slipped forward on the icy step, butting Red in the back as he fell. Like a flash Red turned and knocked the unfortunate woodsman spinning into the snow.

"That's the way I feel!" Red growled.

They all felt that way, but Red only was privileged to show his feelings.

At sight of the big poster Red hurried forward to read it. A poster like that might mean a big murder story in the *Globe* or one of Bullock's auction sales; a new kind of medicine—or a dance.

"It's a dance!" Red exclaimed. "I ain't been to a dance so long I've 'most forgot how to put up my dew-claws!"

That was a joke, considering what he had done at the doorway a minute or two before.

"It's to Flansburg!" Red continued. "That means all them fellers from Dodder's camp 'll be there, and some 'll be down from Morehouseville, an' Grant, an' Ohio, an' Northwood.

"They always have a good time to Flansburg. I never been there yet I didn't find somebody needed lickin' and wasn't afraid to take it!"

"Bill Bright's going to be floor-manager," Jim Bigger, the foreman, remarked slyly. "'Course there won't be anybody 'lowed to fight on the floor."

"What!" Red Hamblin exclaimed, turning in sheer amazement. "You mean to say they won't let me fight where I wants to?"

"Well, you know Bright!" Jim shook his head doubtfully.

"Why—why, I could lick Bill Bright more times than he's got fingers an' toes. Why, I've licked lots of fellers by the name of Bright! They've always set themselves up as fighters, an' I'm the boy that's always took them down."

"Oh, well, of course, the boys won't let more than one tackle you at a time," Jim nodded. "Probably you'll come out all right anyhow. Bill Bright never misuses anybody."

"Misuse anybody!" shouted Red. "You s'pose I'd let him misuse *me?*"

"Oh, I was just sayin' Bill don't get excited none."

"Why, dad-blast it, Jim, I could lick the whole dad-blanged Bright family every day 'n the week! Oh— You—"

There was a yell of laughter as Red turned away in disgust. Jim Bigger was the greatest josher any of them had ever heard, and there he had been joshing Red Hamblin, and Red hadn't discovered it till too late.

"You'll see!" Red declared. "I ain't got nothin' against Bill Bright, but you know what 'd happen if he got to playin' smarty with me!"

"That's so—"

"Supper!" shouted the cook, and all hands filed in to the serious pleasure of the day-end.

There was only sixteen inches of snow on the ground, and it was all frozen up when New Year's Eve came around. The crust would hold any one, and so most of the crew cut across by Maple Ridge to Flansburg for the dance. Red Hamblin led the way through the timber. They came out behind the big hotel, arriving just as the music began to blare for the second set.

Hearing the enticing strains, Red began to dance and prance upon the snow-crust. Playfully he tripped up two of the boys at once. Amid howls of laughter the two went slipping and clawing down the steep bank behind the hotel. The yells brought people out on the front porch and to the windows.

"It's those Black Creek loggers!" the watchers exclaimed in nervous whispers. "They're acting awful to-night!"

"Oh, they're good fellows—never disturb anybody but themselves," a man of experience remarked, adding as a precautionary hedge, "unless somebody disturbs them!"

The loggers swarmed up on the porch and went immediately to the barroom. After a drink around the party from the camp broke up into congenial groups, the younger men scurrying away in search of dancing-partners, the elder men remaining close to the barroom, and the men in their prime, like Red Hamblin, lounging around with keen eyes to what was going on, who were there, and who were staying away.

"Did you notice Bill Bright's got a white collar on to-night?" asked Jim Bigger of Red Hamblin after a while, speaking in a most casual tone of voice.

"He has?" Red snorted. "What you s'pose has got into him?"

"Oh, nobody ever makes any trouble for Bill now," Jim said. "The last three dances he's floor-managed there hasn't been any trouble on the floor at all,

'Course, down around the barroom, away from the ladies, there's been scrappin' there; but not where Bill was floor-manager."

"So he's wearin' a white collar!" Red Hamblin muttered absently. "Ain't that nerve? A floor-manager up West Creek, an' wearin' a white collar!"

Jim withdrew to cover the smile that began to snicker across his countenance.

Shortly afterward Red Hamblin began to edge toward the ballroom, which was on the top floor of the hotel. Though it was a ten-set ballroom, it was alive with dancing people.

Around the walls were long benches, interspersed with rows of wooden chairs, on which sat onlookers, some waiting for an opportunity to dance, and some just looking, their dancing days either not yet begun or else left behind.

Over by the music-platform was Bill Bright, a big, broad man with a twanging voice. His hair was black, and plastered down with perfumed oil. His clothes were of a large dark check. His apparel included, as Red observed, a white collar, a red necktie, a bosom shirt, and a waistcoat. More than that, he had on a pair of cuffs.

Bill kept pulling the collar away from contact with his neck, and the slipping down of his cuffs obviously bothered him. But if Red recognized these as signs of unfamiliarity with collars and cuffs, it made no difference to him.

As soon as the dance ended and the floor began to fill up again, Red caught a dancing-partner on the fly, and led her over to the vicinity of the music—and of the caller-off. There he began to swing and sway as the music opened up.

When Bill Bright called, "Ladies to the right!" Red met the lady to his left with a low whoop of ecstasy and a leap in the air. Happily she knew the catch and the hold for that maneuver and went on breathless, but exhilarated.

During the interval between dances, when all hands were catching their breath, Red Hamblin overheard Bill Bright remark to a little woman sitting on a chair next to the platform:

"The next time you get me to wear these dadgasted things you'll know it—Oh-h! All hands jine and circle aroun'!"

"That's right!" Red remarked to himself. "The next time he wears 'em he won't come to no dance where I am!"

Over by the doorway leading into the hall Jim Bigger was leaning against the jamb. When the set ended and Red Hamblin passed that way, Jim remarked to him:

"It's so about Bill, ain't it, Red?"

"Oh, he's got it on now, all right!" Red answered, emphasizing the *now*.

Red went down to the barroom, where he stood around, either immediately in front of the thick cherry slab or back by the door or window, getting the air. He didn't crowd anybody away from the window, the bar or the door. In fact, he was remarkably polite.

He was even jocular in passing the time of the evening with men from the log-camps up the creek. One man, growing overfamiliar, began to talk in a loud voice about how he had whipped a big half-Indian down on the Erie Canal by Lock 36, and after whipping him had knocked him into the canal for good measure.

"Hear that!" Ross Compty whispered to Red. "He's lookin' for sunthin'."

"You 'tend to him," Red suggested. "I aint got time."

"You mean that—honest?" Ross asked with bated breath. "Gee!"

"Sure! Ain't I a friend of yourn? I don't want all the fun!"

Ross swaggered over to the bar and called all hands up for a drink. The boaster refused.

"Me drink with youse?" he asked.

Before the sneer and insult of voice and manner had been fully given Ross leaped at him.

There was no choice between the two men. They mumbled and fumbled and wrestled, clawed and walloped around for several minutes. Some few men waded in, trying to be peacemakers, but Red stepped

up and gave two of them back-handed cuffs and forced plenty of room for the scrap.

After a few minutes of indecisive fighting a look of intense disgust came to Red's countenance; reaching suddenly, he threw Ross back into the crowd of spectators. As Ross's opponent rolled over and rose on his hands and knees, Red picked the logger up and threw him broadside against the wall. The windows shook; the lights flickered; the glassware behind the bar jingled.

"Thar!" Red remarked. "Hear the difference in the echo!"

Red sauntered into the hallway. He stood absently gazing around when a low, shrill voice giggled in his ear:

"Why, hello, Red. Ain't you dancin' to-night? Me 'n you ain't danced none since I seen you to Noblesborough!"

"Eh? Why, Dory, is it you?"

"Sure it's me. Who's cookin' to Biggers's camp now? I've ben up to Dodders's all the fall, but, you know, I'm sick of them fellers up there. They ain't no good."

Dora sniffed.

Dora Hearn was a tall, rounded, wavy kind of a person, with forty kinds of wriggles and twists and tippings of her head and rollings of her bright, blue eyes. She always had liked Red Hamblin.

"We got a good, husky crew over to Black Creek," Red told her; "and Jim's up-stairs somewheres. Like's not he wants a new cook, but I don't know about that. I hearn somebody say ourn was goin' out before the spring drive."

"Would you like to have me over there?" Dora asked, rolling her eyes.

"I could stand it if you could," Red grinned. "You never seen such an awful bunch of eaters as we be over on Black Creek."

"Oh, well, you'd come in an' help peel 'taters sometimes, wouldn't you—er wipe dishes?"

"I'd wipe the tin platin' right off 'em," Red laughed. "Let's go up an' dance."

"Oh, I don't know, Red—yes, I will."

Leaning heavily on Red's arm, she went up-stairs, where they found a place to dance. While Red danced like a man of tangled watch-springs, she lolled and swayed through the figures, rolling her eyes around and resting on Red's arm like a bale of animated cotton.

"Look at Bill Bright," she whispered to Red with sudden interest. "I never seen him with a white collar on before. Ain't he a handsome man, Red?"

"I could spoil his looks with two side-swipes and a punch," Red grumbled savagely.

For retort, Dora giggled and crouched up to Red's elbow, but rolling her eyes toward Bill nevertheless. And Bill Bright, being a gallant, and probably not noticing who her partner was, slipped into the set during a ladies-to-the-right and stole a swing with her on a youth who was not alert.

Red, at the opposite side of the circle, saw the incident. When Dora came around to him, he swung with such violence that he lifted her off her feet.

"My lan'! You'll throw me across the floor!" she gasped when she had recovered her equilibrium.

"I can't stand seein' the way them namby-pamby fellers swings a girl. They go mincin' around like they was walkin' on nettles."

"But Bill Bright's real gentlemanlike," she retorted, seeing the drift of Red's comment.

"I likes kind of fat gentlemen—to eat," Red grimaced.

"Bill's got brains. Course *he* don't have to work," Dora sniffed.

"If a man ain't no muscle, he has to have brains," Red jeered.

Dora suddenly changed the subject:

"What do you s'pose Bill went an' married that little Squeen girl for? I bet she don't weigh more'n a hundred pounds."

"What 'd she want to marry a feller like him for?" Red demanded.

"Why, he could marry anybody," Dora smiled. "He don't run down in his

looks the way some men does when they gets married."

"You wait 'll you see him next time," Red growled.

Then, beseechingly:

"What's got into you, anyhow, Dory? You never paid much attention to them smarty, dancin'-master kind of fellers."

"Oh, I was jes' foolin', Red. I was talkin' to Jim Bigger, and he told me you was tearin' around about Bill there. He ain't done a day of work in five years—his wife's got a little money, they say."

"I knowed she must have somethin' to kind of make up what she lacks in heft," Red nodded.

"She's got an awful temper, I heard say," Dora resumed after a promenade and a swing. "When she gets mad, she flies all to pieces, just like a cat. She's awful!"

"Fer a woman, I s'pose," Red admitted. "But ladies don't count in a fight—you know what I mean?"

"Oh, I know all right," Dora simpered. "But, of course, ladies don't count."

"You know what I mean. What you rubbin' it in for, anyhow?"

"Because ladies don't count." Dora smiled ironically.

Red stormed away on grand-right-and-left. Dora's tongue had tamed more than one logger up West Creek. Moreover, she had refused forty offers of marriage, preferring to be a cook in a log-camp, with forty "fellows" to living in a lonesome cabin in the woods clearing as the wife of one woodsman.

"When I begin to get homely, like's not I'll up and git married," she told some.

But Red Hamblin bragged that he had never asked her, nor any other woman, to marry him. Some one had told Dora of Red's boast since she had met him, and now Red was undergoing the strange sensation of being absorbed without knowing just how it happened.

He took Dora to supper with him, and danced with her the first set afterward. When she went away with Bill Bright for the second set after supper, Red had a curious feeling of having been rebuked for something he hadn't done, but which he had been accused of doing. Not that Red knew what it was. Not in the least. But Dora did.

Red, thus suddenly left alone when he had been enjoying clever and entertaining company for two hours, backed away from the sets that had been formed, and took refuge against the wall near the music. He became conscious of a very small woman sitting very erect in the chair next to him. Her eyes were like some gray precious stone, they shone so brightly. She was watching every move of Bill Bright and Dora Hearn.

Red observed the direction of her gaze. He also noticed that while Dora was as fond as ever, Bill Bright, at intervals, glanced nervously in the direction of the tart little woman next to Red, who was Mrs. Bright.

"Ain't she disgustin'!" Red heard the little woman mutter under her breath.

Red grinned as he watched Bright.

"Why, that man's scared of a woman," Red said to himself. "Take a man that's nervous er kind of shook up an' he's easy to beat up."

When Red's gaze roamed around the room he saw that most of the Black Creek camp boys had come up from below. They were scattered around the hall watching the dancing without much obvious interest. Their real expectations were centered around Red, as Red soon realized.

Somehow, it had got around that Red Hamblin and Bill Bright had it in for each other. Red had not heard much about it till Jim Bigger came around and sat down beside him.

"Bill Bright told the boys he was goin' to steal your girl, Red," Bigger whispered. "I kind of thought you'd ought to know he was talkin'."

"I ain't talkin'," Red whispered back. "If that feller's lookin' for somethin' to happen, it 'll sure happen, Jim. You know I ain't never looked for no trouble, but I don't let any man abuse me.

"Look at him! Don't it make you sick to see a feller what uses perfume onto himself? Course you can't dance with some women 'thout gettin' all smelled up with perfume; but you know what I mean —a man who puts the stuff on hisself."

"Yes, I know," Bigger answered softly. "Bright says the reason he uses perfume is so he won't smell the hemlock and balsam and spruce that woodsmen has on their clothes."

"He said that!" Red blurted out.

Then, becoming conscious of the pair of glittering eyes directed at him from the face of the lady on his left, he subsided. As the figure ended, he plowed his way across the hall to the doorway, followed by Jim.

"I see Bright got yer gal, Red," Pete Lansley grinned.

"That ain't all he's goin' to get," Red snarled.

For a minute it seemed as if Red would go charging across the dance-hall and start something right there, but on second thought, having learned that the time was only 2.15 A.M., he retired down-stairs. Most of his camp-mates followed him, for they had little or no interest in the dancing.

"Did he bluff you out?" some one asked unwisely.

Red, perturbed by his inward uneasiness, welcomed the diversion which the question offered. He turned on the man and, after a futile effort to control his tongue, burst into a profusion of wilderness vituperation.

It was a welcome relief to Red. It made him feel better. He had had his feelings pent in for so long that he hadn't been able to think straight. He had been laboring under some kind of emotion which prevented his seeing what to do and how to do it.

He now swaggered up to the bar and called all hands. He had a manner of holding his head which indicated much to those who knew Red Hamblin. It was plain to be seen that he had stood just about all that he was going to stand from anybody, let alone from Bill Bright. Red Hamblin didn't have anything much against Bill Bright, but he didn't have to take anything he didn't want to take from any man.

"I've always treated Bill Bright like a man," Red said in a calm voice to Jim Bigger. "You know that. But when he goes around insinuatin' that I smell like balsam, an' takin' my girl away from me, an' puttin' on airs, pretendin' he can wear a white collar to dances where I go to just as well as not, things is just about gone far enough."

Red stalked toward the door and then made his way up-stairs. He did not hurry; he stopped and talked to two or three people he knew, just to show how cool he was.

He met Dora Hearn on the second floor and asked her if she wouldn't dance the next set with him.

"Just a minute, Red!" she exclaimed as she patted her coiffure and replaced a hairpin or two.

In another minute she was returning eagerly to the ballroom, where a set was forming. There were plenty of vacant places around the outer sets, but Red passed them by until he came to the head set opposite the music.

This set was full. At the foot stood a stranger with a long arm and broad shoulders. Red looked at the head, where there was a little rosy-cheeked young man with a white collar and bright-blue necktie. The little young man was smoking a cigarette.

Red crossed the opening as if he was going to speak to the fiddler. As he passed the little man he stepped on the other's patent-leather shoes so hard that the youth sat upon the platform with much violence.

The young man, seeing the woodsman and his large female ally, stepped quickly back and disappeared.

"Two more couples this way!" Bill Bright called from the second set over. "One more couple this way!"

"He didn't see you!" giggled Dora as

Red looked around, his disappointment plainly to be observed on his face.

When a man has nerved himself up to a considerable task and then finds the accomplishment of it ridiculously easy it is a shock.

Red danced in his stolen place, and never a word was said to him by any one. Bill Bright called off the numbers with his famous voice, and the set was danced through without a break.

Red left the place with a feeling that he had been cheated. He had planned it all out; he had fixed everything just the way he wanted it—and nothing happened.

"I'd ought to have taken the big feller at the foot of the set," he told himself. "He'd 'a' pulled up a little scrap, and that 'd fetch Bright all right."

He turned and glanced toward Bright. The floor-manager was stooping over the little woman who was his wife; she was talking with a violence that made her shake from head to foot. She had the lapel of Bright's coat in her left hand and was jerking her thumb toward Red with her right.

Bright was shaking his head in negation while his wife was making very positive affirmative nods. Bright raised his finger, shook it soothingly, and nodded with a wise air. His wife gave a grim nod and returned to her vigil beside the music.

"That little feller's her cousin," Dora giggled, "an' she's been layin' the law down to Bill!"

"Her family kind of runs to runts, don't they?" Red grinned. "Honest, I didn't know I'd touched him yet, when he flopped over on the platform."

"The next dance will be a two-step!" shouted Floor-Manager Bright. "Get yer partners for a two-step!"

"Oh, I promised Bill I'd take the next round dance with him!" Dora suddenly remembered.

Jerking clear of Red's arm, she dashed to Bright's side, where she began to whisper and grin in a way that made Red wince.

But there was nothing, under the rules of the woods dances, that he could do. No matter in which direction he glanced, it seemed as if he spied the grinning countenance of one or other of his home-camp crew.

With a snort he turned and headed straight toward Mrs. Bright.

As he approached her he bowed low.

"You've fergotten me," he said; "but I was interduced to you by Pete Denning over to Ohio, and you and me danced—"

"Why, yes—I remember!" Mrs. Bright nodded, smiling with a savage glance out of the corner of her eyes at her husband, on whose arm Dora was hanging. "It was a fine set!"

"I ain't much good at these here round dances," Red said, "but if you was a mind to try—"

"Why—well, yes; I don't mind. Of course I will."

She bobbed to her feet and stood beside the burly, red-whiskered, broad-shouldered woodsman. She walked along with him for a few yards; then step by step they caught into the music.

To the amazement of the spectators who knew Red, he began to get into the time and then into the step.

They ran and they teetered, they skipped and they balanced, they see-sawed and they bucked, they swirled around and around, and as the music quickened they quickened. They began to romp the length of the hall. They danced circles around Bill Bright and the lackadaisical Dora Hearn.

The observers rose higher and higher on their tiptoes as they saw Bill Bright paying more and more attention to Red and Mrs. Bright than he paid to his own steps and the large girl lolling upon his arm.

"Gee!" Bigger whispered in his excitement. "Keep yer eyes open for what's comin'! Red's found his way at last!"

Red's whiskers made a canopy over the head of Mrs. Bright; she swung upon his arm with a gay abandon that had not been seen in many a day up West Creek.

Red lifted her in the air at arm's length in one of his maddest whirls. At sight of that Bill Bright dragged his own partner over to the music.

"That 'll do for this one," he said in a low voice to old Jeff.

But Red divined his intention in a moment.

"Keep 'er goin', Jeff!" Red shouted. "Give us sunthin' lively! Who-e-e!"

Bright's mastership of the floor was thus openly questioned. His ability as a man had been derided. There was only one answer that he could make, and that he made:

"Who's runnin' this ball, anyhow?"

"Keep 'er goin', Jeff!" Red whooped, and old Jeff sawed 'er down as if the sound of his music had drowned all other sounds.

Bright dropped Dora's waist like a hot fried-cake and started toward old Jeff. Red lifted Mrs. Bright from the floor, carried her like a little girl to the wall, and sat her in a chair. Then he cut across to intervene between Bright and Jeff, as he was bound to do.

He and Bill Bright met with a crash that was heard clear down in the barroom. There was a roar as the crowd, which had been waiting for the event of the evening, surged up to see what was taking place.

Red had the advantage. He was like a gnarly birch-tree, while Bill Bright had lived on his reputation for some time. Bill landed a futile right and left on Red's hardwood countenance as Red bored in with loud thumps on Bright's rolling ribs.

Bright began to stagger back; his breathing was heard at each loud, hollow, thump.

"Red's got 'm goin'!" Jim Bigger remarked critically. "Keep 'em back, boys! Give 'em lots of room!"

With practised organization the woodsmen made an ample circle. The perfumed ball-manager was now getting his, and it was their joy to observe Red's scientific dressing down of the man who had worn a white collar and bosom shirt. It was like a last half of the ninth inning with two out and 3 to 1 in favor of the home team.

But a little bundle of whalebone, ironwood, and claws suddenly pitched into the scene. With a screech Mrs. Bill Bright landed on Red's back.

She caught Red by the whiskers with one hand and by the hair with the other. With her pointed knees she trod upon the small of his back, and with her teeth she took hold of his neck in the outstanding muscles just behind his ear.

Red doubled around. With a roar he fell upon his back and turned a half-somersault. He was like a rabbit in the clutches of an ermine. He could neither escape nor rid himself of the holds that held him.

Bright, with the idea of seconding his wife's motions, charged in; he met Red's fist in the extension of his waistcoat. Bright sat down hard, and Red escaped to the head of the stairs, where his burden let go. He tripped and bumped down the stairs, kept right on down the lower flight, and so into the outdoors and back to camp.

When the Black Creek loggers arrived at the camp Red was asleep in his cot. He positively refused to be awakened by any noise or comments. But when, half an hour or so later, the call for breakfast came Red bounded out of bed with the first of them.

"Mornin', Red," Foreman Bigger greeted him. "How yo' feelin'?"

"Purty good," Red answered.

"Yes? Thought you'd be kind a sore this mornin', after scrappin' a female wild cat."

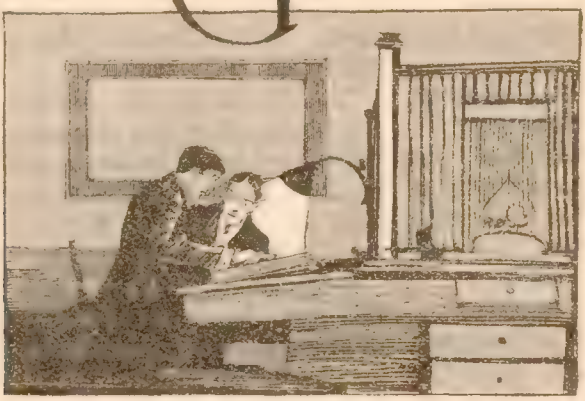
Red laughed.

"Wa'n't that the dad-blastedest thing you ever seen? But I know now why Bill Bright wore them collars an' perfumery an' things. He wa'n't to blame at all."

"That so? Why?"

"She made him do it."

The Gilded Trap



by George M. A. Cain

Author of "From Dusk to Dark," "Four Speeds for Forest Hill," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS ALREADY PRINTED.

BRUCE EVANS, engaged to Ellen Randolph, gets a mere pittance at the bank where he is one of the bookkeepers. In a mix-up over a missing key to the stamp-drawer, Evans loses his temper and lets fall some words about Mercer, the head bookkeeper, having got his job because Wilbridge, a big depositor, happens to be an uncle of his. Instead of getting a call-down for his temerity, Wheelock, the cashier, invites him out to his home to dinner and Mercer takes him to his club for lunch. Then Wheelock promises him promotion to an assistant paying tellership. More, he suggests that he make a little money on the side by investing in Tubular Brass, and even gives him a check for one thousand two hundred dollars, instructing him to take out the cash for it and carry it down to a broker's firm. This, still wondering, Evans does; but at closing that night Adams asks him to help him in tallying up for the day, and Bruce is horrified to find no check of Wheelock's to offset the one thousand two hundred dollars he has taken out of the bank funds.

CHAPTER VII.

A NIGHT OF HORROR.

"COME on out of it, old man. Six-fifty. I don't want to take the night to this job." Adams had before him the totals of the cash count by the tellers.

"What's next?" he added more impatiently, looking up at Evans, who sat fumbling through the last half-dozen checks and staring at them as if they were ghosts of a man he had murdered.

"That's all," Bruce replied in a scared whisper.

"All. Great Scott! You don't tell me I'm twelve hundred out? I can generally keep track of the figures as I run them through." He jerked the lever that would stamp the total and pulled at the strip.

"Why—you're twelve hundred short!" he exclaimed. "I thought you said that was all."

But Evans, with his head whirling, his fingers shaking so that he could hardly hold the bundle through which he was rapidly turning over one check after the other, did not look up.

"What's the matter?" Adams asked.

"I—I don't know," Bruce answered huskily. "There's another check—for twelve hundred. I cashed it myself. I had Meyer's place for a few minutes after—opening."

This story began in the December Argosy.

Yesterday he would have enunciated that fact with a note of pride. To-day!

"Oh, the devil!" groaned Adams at the prospect of going through the whole job again. "For Heaven's sake, don't mix them up. Here—"

He reached for a pile. "Was it on the Ironclad?"

"Yes—I cashed it for Mr. Wheelock—his own check."

The Trust Company's checks had the place for the numeral amount at the right-hand side. Adams held the bundle intact as he swiftly examined one after another of the figures.

"Wheelock must be blowing himself," he commented. "I didn't suppose he owned that much money. Nothing doing in this pile. Here—what's this?"

He picked up the pile of checks on outside banks, fingered for one of a color similar to some issued for the Ironclad's depositors.

"No;" he slaughtered the faint hope he had raised.

Unsteadily Bruce had got to his feet and bent down to peer under the desk. The effort to rise sent his heart pounding in his ears. He was faint, sick.

"You cashed it right after opening?" Adams asked. "It ought to be near the bottom."

"The very bottom," Bruce spoke hollowly. "Wheelock gave it to me before I went into the cage. I put it on the file before any one came in."

"I suppose Meyer's dropped it then—or whoever brought them in," Adams surmised.

Evans followed him around the passage to the teller's cage. They went in. Several loose articles they moved about.

"Oh, rats!" Adams uttered in disgust. "What's the sense in hunting any further? Meyer's shut the thing up in his drawer by mistake, I suppose. You know whose check it was. Wheelock will give you a duplicate, if you can't find it. Come on."

Bruce opened his mouth to object. Then he closed it again. He could not betray too much anxiety. He helped with putting things in order and locking up drawers and safe.

They went out together. Adams began to whistle the latest ditty. It seemed almost profane to Evans. How could any one in the world be cheerful with that twelve hundred unaccounted for?

"Going up or down?" Adams asked at the corner. "S'long, then."

He lived in Brooklyn. With a nod he sprinted for the subway.

Bruce stood irresolute. Every torturing instinct bade him go back to the bank and hunt for the missing check. The idea of leaving the building with that awful discrepancy in it was compellingly terrible.

Reason told him that he and Adams had looked in all the places the check could have lurked in, save those to which they would have access again only in the morning. Fear, a fearful hope, told him that there might be some other.

More reasoning fear warned him not to attract the attention of the janitor to his worry; fear horrified with the thought that the scrubwoman might find the check and destroy it.

At length he went back. The door was still open. Herman Peterson, the janitor, stood within, a short pipe between his teeth, directing the sweeping of the place.

"Say, Peterson." Bruce tried to speak lightly, "tell Jenny to look out for a stray check. We've missed one. If she finds it, tell her she can leave it on my desk."

"All right," grunted the janitor gutturally. He began to speak to the woman in Swedish. "We'll look out for it," he spoke again to Evans.

Bruce fought down the wish to do more hunting himself. Reason told him he had done just enough. He had added two possible witnesses to his own anxiety over a lost check, in case—

But it couldn't be. Wheelock wouldn't dare do it. He wouldn't believe it of the cashier. No, or of Mercer. It would be too risky to do a thing like that.

Besides, it would be the worst case yet of effect too big for cause. Wheelock could not care enough to lend him money to steal it for him. Unless—

Oh, there was nothing else to it. Wheelock and Mercer had played to "frame" him. It was all another plant. And he had been fool enough to fall into it within a week of last Monday, just because they had smiled on him a few times.

They never had liked him. They had shown their dislike, until he had scared them about kotowing to the influence of Mercer's uncle.

No, it hadn't been that at all. Wheelock and Mercer had been tampering with old Wilbridge's account; they believed he had detected it—and they had got rid of him.

To-morrow they would be waiting for him. To-morrow—Bruce suddenly shrank from the eye of a passing policeman.

What could he prove? What weight would his words have? He and Wheelock alone knew of the check. His word against Wheelock's!

He tried to draw some reassurance from the fact that Wheelock was Jessie's father. But his distraught mind refused to find the comfort. Jessie was beautiful, wonderful, fascinating—then he instantly doubted all beautiful, fascinating women. There was only one kind of woman in the world. It was Ellen's kind—plain, simple, reliable, good.

He suddenly desired to see Ellen as he had never done before. And he dared not go to her. He could not tell her what had happened.

He walked all the way up-town to his boarding-place. He had used next to the last car-fare this morning, anyhow. The walking tired him. He dropped into a chair, got up and threw himself on the bed, got up from there—

Merciful Heaven! What should he do with himself? He felt he would go insane before morning. Perhaps it would be as well. Insanity was no disgrace. An asylum could hardly be as bad as a prison.

If he might only die! He wished he had not been brought up with quite so much religious training as made him a little more afraid to kill himself than to live.

The dinner hour came. The thought of food nauseated him. Yet he feared to attract attention by staying away from the table. He wondered if his looks would not attract more attention than his absence.

But he went down to the dining-room and his cheap dinner. He tried to eat. He said he had a headache—and he was far, far within the truth. He might have added heartache, backache, and ache in his overtired limbs; for he had given up trying to sit or lie still, and walked a mile or two more in his room.

Utterly tired after two hours more of floor-pacing, he undressed and got into bed. He hoped that his weariness might bring sleep in spite of his worry.

It was too much to hope for. He tossed about, got up and took a drink of water, returned, got up again. The maddening minutes would not hurry. When the night seemed to have become already interminable, he struck a match, and his old silver watch told him it was not yet quite ten oclock.

A grown-up newsboy came through the streets in the old-time effort to hawk his left-over papers as special extras. "All about the U-boat explosion," he squawked raucously.

Bruce got up hastily. If he but had a paper to read! But he could not go down the boarding-house stairs to the door in his night-gown. He did not own a bath-robe.

The paper would have told him about Tubular Brass's last selling price. He had lost interest in that. He would have given advance salary for a year if he had never had any money to put into the thing.

He might win, might at least draw out what he had put in, and make good the deficit at the bank. It would only make matters worse, he decided. Adams had

heard him declare there was a check. For him to offer replacing cash would be equivalent to acknowledging that there had been no check.

The clock struck eleven. Ages later it struck twelve. One came—two—three. Birds of the air who toiled not nor spun nor worried over lost checks began to twitter under the eaves. That sickly gray came, which, in a great city, marks the ending of night's brightness and the beginning of another day.

It had come—the day of disaster. He had never entertained a superstition. Yet he could not help recalling that it was Friday, the day of ill-luck.

Soon he rose, tried to bathe some of the ache from his temples, dressed slowly, but with almost spiteful disregard of the results in his appearance. It would be hours yet before breakfast would be ready. He sat down to wait.

It occurred to him that he might go out and get a morning paper at the corner. He didn't want a morning paper—didn't want anything—

He awoke with a start, a cry upon his lips. He had dreamed that a policeman had seized him by the collar, handcuffed him. All the other bookkeepers and clerks at the bank had stood by and stared at him. Wheelock had pointed a plump, well-manicured finger that came nearer and nearer and pressed on his forehead and felled him and crushed him, while his ears rang with the word:

"Thief! Thief! Thief!"

"I'm not—I'm not," he was shrieking. He was sure he had shrieked. He wondered if he had been overheard.

It was seven o'clock. All the noises of the city were in full blast. He hurried down to breakfast. He drank four cups of the chickory mixture Mrs. Lundrom called coffee. He could eat nothing.

He tried to walk down-town. He was too tired, too weak. He reflected that the eight cents remaining could not get him out of danger, could not bring him help in danger. He might as well ride. The elevated road would get him down to the bank an hour too suspiciously soon. He boarded a surface car.

Two blocks from the bank he pondered whether he should go on or try flight. He had taken a transfer. The transfer would take him to either one of two rivers or Battery Place. In fact, the three pennies still in his pocket would give him a choice of either of the rivers.

He could not bring himself to suicide. And flight—the suspense of it would kill him. Better the worst than the eternal fear of it. He must know.

Slowly he walked the two blocks. Herman had opened up, was standing in the door. He nodded to Evans. Bruce decided not to ask if the check had been found. Herman would tell him if it had.

Everything was locked up yet. Mercer generally had charge of the unlocking of the vaults and the safe. Bruce could not even get his books. He sat down at his desk.

"Gee! man, you're early." Mercer was the next to arrive. "You must have been feeling good this—but, great Scott! You don't look it. What's the trouble?"

"I don't feel well," Bruce responded in a tone that corroborated the words. "I—"

After all, he might as well tell Mercer. Such news was for the head-bookkeeper first of all.

"Adams and I couldn't find one check. It was for twelve hundred dollars."

"Phew!" Mercer seemed taken aback, yet nothing like as worried as the occasion warranted. It flashed upon Bruce that the head-bookkeeper had undoubtedly known of the scheme, if he had not helped to carry it out.

"How do you know it was one check?" Mercer inquired then.

"It was one I had cashed myself when I was in Meyer's place—Mr. Wheelock gave it to me to cash before I went in. I put it on the file and—"

"Oh, it was Wheelock's check?" Mercer broke in.

"Yes," Bruce said. "Adams and I hunted—"

"Well, so long as it was Wheelock's, there's nothing to worry about. He may go up in the air a bit about it. Probably Meyer mislaid it. It 'll turn up. If it doesn't, it isn't as if it had been some depositor who might take advantage of it and declare he hadn't cashed a check at all."

But Mercer did not know that the money had been for Evans. Bruce decided that the head-bookkeeper was not in the plot. Mercer chattered on:

"George! It would take more than a lost check to worry me. You ought to be in my boat. I had five hundred shares of Tubular Brass and let go of them at forty-eight. And now—have you seen the paper?"

"No," Bruce answered because he felt obliged to say something.

"Fifty-six! Fif-ty-s-i-x!" Mercer mourned. "What do you know about that?"

Before Bruce could even think about it, Wheelock had come in. He pulled together what was left of him.

"Mr. Wheelock," he spoke hoarsely, "can I speak to you a minute?"

"Sure thing," the cashier replied breezily, leading the way into his office. There he turned, smiling. The smile became a puzzled look of half alarm.

"Well!" he exclaimed. "I've heard but never believed in people dying of joy. You certainly take a little money harder than any man I ever saw."

"It isn't that," Bruce told him. The man's geniality was beginning to disarm his fears in spite of himself. "That check you gave me yesterday—Adams and I couldn't find it last night."

"Couldn't find it?" Wheelock repeated after him. "Why not?"

"I don't know. I put it on the file—it was the first check, of course. When we started to go through them with the machine last night it wasn't there. We hunted—"

"Somebody's getting damned careless around here," Wheelock broke in sharply. "First it's the key; now it's the check. Lucky it wasn't a check of some of the depositors. Who brought the checks in from the cage?"

"I don't know."

"Well—I guess the best thing is to make out a duplicate. We won't say anything about it; only, you might tell Adams that I'm going to have some watching done outside. If the other check turns up, give me this one back."

He had got out his big check-book, was writing a check! Bruce felt himself swaying unsteadily, held the back of a chair for support.

The danger was over! There had never been any danger!

The reaction made him faint. For an instant he thought he was going to serve as a complete example of dying for joy. Only it was not joy. The relief was so great that it hurt.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHANGED VIEWS.

"THANK you," Bruce croaked, as Wheelock handed over the duplicate check.

He drew on all his will-power for the purpose of hurrying out to the coat-room or somewhere he could be alone. He was afraid he was going to break down and weep. But Wheelock stopped him.

"And now, if I were you, I'd get down to Kent's and get rid of that Tubular Brass. This jump has been so sudden I'm scared at it. You can tell Mercer I'm sending you up to the Providence. The boys all understand that I've concluded to get you outdoors whenever it's possible for your health's sake." Wheelock half winked.

"And don't forget that you're going with me to-morrow afternoon to White Plains Manor. You might bring along your boating togs. I've a little boat out on the Sound, and, if Sunday's nice, we'll have a cruise."

At any other time this would have brought alarm. Now Bruce barely heard

it. He forgot even to express any pleasure in the prospect.

He had the check again. The fact that he could not buy boating-togs and a decent suit that was not for boating did not matter. Getting rid of Tubular Brass or crawling through the tubes would not matter. He had the check. He was not going to be denounced, arrested, imprisoned. He—

Why, yes, he was going down to Kent's. He was going to get rid of Tubular Brass. That must mean to sell it.

He was not quite sure how one went about selling a hundred-odd shares of stock; but probably Mr. Chase would help him out some way. But first he was going to get that check into the books and the file and generally so fixed that the bank would have to burn to a black cinder for it to disappear.

There, that was done! Thanks be to all the powers that stand by to save the innocent from destruction! Bruce sighed. The relief was becoming more bearable.

He was safe! Well, now to tell Mercer and go down to Kent's. Hadn't he saved that transfer? No.

But he didn't mind walking now. All told, he was glad of the chance to walk. He felt as if he had lost a lot of weight without losing any strength, as if he were floating on air. Safe!

Heaven forbid that anything like that ever happen to him again. The next time would surely kill him. But, what a fool he had been to worry about it! There never had been a thing to get scared at. He was losing his nerve. That wasn't to be wondered at, considering the years of dark drudgery through which he had gone.

Really, a man in his condition had no business saddling himself with new burdens. He ought to accumulate a few dollars for a rainy day, so that he wouldn't have to worry about the bills and the payments on the chicken plot. The chicken plot—um-m-m—

Boating togs! What did Wheelock think he was—a millionaire? Still, if he was a little ahead on this Tubular Brass—hadn't Mercer said something about it's going to fifty-seven? Hadn't Wheelock mentioned a sudden rise?

But Wheelock had advised getting out; said that the rise looked dangerous. Still—he might be a few dollars ahead.

He would have gone to look at the tape had not half a dozen men formed a crowd around it, as he entered the broker's office.

"Sell your Tubular?" Chase echoed in a note of surprise. "So, you're going to play safe, eh? Well, if they all did that, more of them would make money. Let's see—a hundred and ten, wasn't it?"

He had glanced at a small book. Bruce nodded.

"Sell a hundred and ten Tubular, Charley," called the manager of the place.

Bruce hesitated a moment, then—

"How soon do you suppose I can hear about that sale? I mean, how soon do you think you'll be able—"

"Sold. Fifty-eight and three-quarters—same for the ten," Charley called back.

"All right, Mr. Evans—er—you were asking?" spoke Chase.

"No—nothing," Bruce said hastily.

His question had been answered. The sale had been accomplished just as easily as the purchase! He was glad Mr. Chase had not caught his absurd query.

"Want anything else this morning?" the manager was inquiring.

"Why—could I get the money?" Bruce queried.

"Certainly. Just take this in to the cashier. He'll figure it up and pay you. Hope you'll drop in again, Mr. Evans. We're right here to help our customers make the mazuma, you know."

Chase held out his hand. Bruce shook it mechanically. Then he started through a rear door that the manager had indicated. Mr. Chase was a nice man to do business with.

"Huh?" The cashier stared at the little slip Chase had given him.

"Isn't it all right?" Bruce asked anxiously.

"Er—oh, yes. But, say—where'd you get the tip to sell? I've got a lot of this myself," the cashier said.

"Why, Mr. Wheelock—"

"Oh! That's all right. Just a minute, Mr. Evans."

Bruce wondered at the brisk young man's manner. One might have thought that the cashier realized some fault in the question he had just asked. He had dropped that line with peculiar haste. Bruce watched him figuring rapidly.

"You want cash, I suppose?" he asked.

He seemed to take the answer for granted, and began counting out money before Bruce had made up his mind that a check would be a safer thing to carry.

Then he gasped. The spruce young man had laid down two thousand-dollar bills, was adding a five-hundred-dollar bill, reaching for hundred-dollar bills. He put some tens and fives on the rest, then a quarter and a nickel and two cents. He scribbled some figures across a blank receipt, then he handed out the fortune with the blank and a pen!

Twenty-eight hundred and seventy-five dollars and thirty-two cents! Was it a dream? Had the world gone crazy? Was Bruce losing his mind?

He signed his name mechanically.

"Aren't you going to take the money?" the cashier laughed.

Bruce had started for the door without it.

He managed a grin as he turned and got the wonderful little bundle of big bills. One of the two pennies dropped to the tiled floor. He bent down and fished it out from under a chair. Flushed of face, he hurried out to the street.

All the way to the bank he was trying to figure what twelve hundred from twenty-eight hundred and seventy-five dollars and thirty-two cents would leave. Whatever it was, he would deposit it the moment he had settled with Mr. Wheelock.

He was going to have a bank account of his own. He was going to have fifteen—sixteen hundred and—something. He was going to draw checks with his name on the front of them.

He could buy—Ellen's chicken farm! A man stared at the strange sight of a fellow hurrying so fast and laughing aloud as he hurried. A chicken farm! It was to be thirty-two by a hundred feet! Bruce was still laughing when he got to the bank.

"Gee! Evans, what did you take while you were out?" one of the fellows asked as he brushed through toward Wheelock's office. He was quite breathless.

"You got back quick," Wheelock commented in a friendly tone. "How did you make out?"

"It was—fifty-eight and something—three-quarters. I—the cashier gave me twenty-eight hundred and seventy-five dollars and thirty-two cents. I—how much do I owe you, Mr. Wheelock?" He thought surely there would be a split of the profits to make.

"Twelve hundred dollars," Wheelock responded. "I'll let you buy me a nice, high-priced drink with the interest. Pretty good, wasn't it?"

"But—but—you ought to have some of the profits," Bruce stammered.

"That's right. You can take me to lunch. I ought to say at the Waldorf. But we'll let you off with Pabst's. On the way we'll stop in at the Twentieth National and deposit it."

"Why, I was going to deposit it right here," Bruce objected. It had occurred to him that it would not be unpleasant to have the others know of his substantially well fixed condition.

"And have them set the detective on you to find out where you stole it?" Wheelock said with a chuckle. "Say, you are green in some things for a man who knows so much about others. Don't you know that an employee in a bank never wants to show any sudden amount of wealth, unless he's got an inheritance-tax receipt in his pocket? Don't you know that you've been breaking the bank's rules? And don't you know that

the time of all times to look out for the rules is when you're thinking of breaking them?"

Bruce smiled vaguely. Somehow he had always thought of Mr. Wheelock as the maker of the rules. The cashier's attitude toward them seemed an anomaly. But he had no mind for worry over such trifling riddles this morning.

Nor had he any mind for work. Though he sat with the ledgers open in front of him, the opening of them was the exact amount of his accomplishment. Between him and the columns of figures was a blinding, golden haze. The one result he got was the conclusion to keep out the seventy-five dollars in cash.

"Say, old man, was it a boy or a girl?"

Beecham, who had the A to F books, put this query. Beecham had married a year ago, as every one knew. Nobody had heretofore bothered to find out whether Bruce were married or single.

Bruce blossomed out with the first jest he had attempted in the bank.

"Both," he answered with a laugh.

"What? Twins?" The alarm in Beecham's voice only explained itself a fortnight later when Beecham announced the birth of a son.

"Sure," Evans responded. And he had to spend at least half the rest of the day explaining to his fellows that he was not married, only engaged to be.

This brought him belated felicitations from several, but in a tone of much more assurance than that with which they had offered the original congratulation.

"Say, old man, I'll have to give up that lunch for to-day, after all," Wheelock apologized at noon. "I've got to go down-town. But I'll stick you for it Monday all right. Here's a deposit slip for the twelve hundred; and you can mention my name in putting your own in."

As a matter of precaution Bruce cashed his pay-check that afternoon as he had always done before. It was for twenty-five dollars. He would have preferred not to have quite a hundred on his person, but feared to draw attention to the fact that he did not need the cash.

For the four years since his sister's health had compelled them to give up their flat Evans had always paid Mrs. Lundrom on Friday night. He approached her that evening with a little misgiving.

"Mrs. Lundrom, would you mind taking a check to-night? I made—a little deposit in the bank to-day, and find I didn't leave myself quite enough cash."

He had purchased a new sack suit on his way home. He felt a little wicked over spending twenty-six dollars for it. He had seen some suits in a show window which had spoiled him for anything less expensive.

He had compromised on the boating togs by adding a suit of blue serge which would serve for ordinary wear with an extra pair of white-duck trousers.

Frightened at so enormous an outlay for clothes, he relinquished the idea of getting a fifty-cent tie of bright color.

Also he got a white-felt hat, with the thought that it would answer for the boating and be serviceable about a chicken plot later on. This economy had relieved his mind so that he had wildly "blown" himself to a silk shirt. Then the able salesman persuaded him that a five-dollar Panama hat would last three or four seasons and prove a real saving in the end.

He had forty dollars left. But he was questioning in his mind whether the blue-serge coat with the white pants would not appear too much of a rush on the season if worn as evening dress at dinner. The question had arisen acutely enough to make him inquire the prices of Tuxedo coats at the store. The fact that he could get a passable dinner suit for twenty-five dollars had made the worry about it tangible.

And, if he should buy the dinner suit, fifteen dollars was none too much to have about one even if he were a guest. That he had never dreamed of using up five dollars a week of spending money since

days too remote to recall had nothing to do with it. He had never had to go to a place like Wheelock's for a week-end.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MOTH AND THE ARC LIGHT.

OF course he could not resist the temptation to show himself to his sweetheart in the new sack suit. Some time during the afternoon at the bank it had occurred to him to take Ellen to a good show this evening. Now he altered that decision.

The front of a candy store suggested the means for providing the proper celebration at less expense than tickets to a real play. There was no denying that the sudden accession to opulence was causing a burning sensation in his pockets. He wanted to buy a five-pound box of the best chocolates. Only his limitations in cash warned him to retrenchment.

He got a pound. But another idea had been forgotten. It would be a nice thing, in going to a home where there were ladies, to take along an offering of sweets. As he thought of it he was not sure but it would be the only proper thing.

His cash seemed thinner than ever. Of course he could not take any one-pound box of candy to Miss—to Wheelock's. Nor could he buy them in a shop like this. Huyler's was the name that instantly sprang into his mind. That there were rivals for Huyler's some-time fame was unknown to him. But Huyler's candies would cost enough.

The contrast between a one-pound box of forty-cent candy for his fiancée and a five-pound box of candy at Heaven knew what price for Miss Wheelock gave him a spasm of discomfort.

There was abundant perfectly good explanation. Ellen would certainly scold him for extravagance in buying a pound; Miss Wheelock would be amused and secretly contemptuous of anything less than five. The explanation did not quite relieve the discomfort.

"Why—Bruce!"

Ellen's greeting was an exclamation at the transformation the new clothes had wrought in his appearance. It was more than a matter of clothes. In itself the reaction from last night's fears had had the effect of keying him up nervously.

The slow-dawning realization that he had money, the spending of it as he had never spent money before had induced a complete elation that straightened his shoulders, put spring into his gait, gave him a jauntiness that matched the new check suit and the Panama with enough side twist to the front to border on the slightly rakish.

He stood off and let her admire him. She approached and fingered the lapels of his coat.

"It's beautiful. Where did you get it? Why, I hardly knew you. Mother—just look at this gorgeous young blade and guess who it is."

They were like members of one family. Mrs. Randolph inspected the new suit. He interrupted her highly favorable criticism with:

"Oh, here. I almost forgot this." He handed the box of candy to Ellen. Its outward elegance shocked her.

"Why, Bruce!" she gasped again. "This isn't anybody's birthday."

Her tone showed her alarm over this symbol of extravagance. It annoyed him.

"You don't have to eat them if you don't like them," he said with a laugh which did not quite neutralize the acid of his tone.

"Like them! Of course I like them. But—but I thought we had agreed not to spend any money foolishly. I didn't really need candy. And—when you were getting a new suit, too. Of course you had to have that if you're going to be teller."

"'Ain't it awful, Mabel?'" he quoted. Her reception of the candy impelled him to add to her worry. "What do you think I paid for that suit?"

"Well, you never got it for twelve dollars," she guessed.

"No, nor twice twelve," he boasted with a note of defiance. "I paid twenty-six dollars for these duds."

His intention was half teasing. His failure to get any response save a long stare by which the girl convinced herself that he was telling the truth caused him to abate her alarm when he was sure she was not going to express it in words.

Ellen fingered the knotted ribbon on the little candy-box with trembling hands.

"It didn't break me at that," he now told her. "I made a little money extra this week."

He awaited an inquiry as to the amount of his winning. It did not come.

"Look at this," he bade her.

He had pocketed the new bank-book, half afraid of leaving it about his room at the cheap boarding-house. He opened its first page with its single entry. She read it twice over, blinked, read it again.

To her sixteen hundred dollars was an amount of money almost as meaningless as the vast figures in which astronomers glibly mention the number of miles to some fixed star. Of course other people might have sixteen hundred dollars, might have sixteen thousand or a million dollars. But, as in any way related to herself, sixteen hundred was as fabulous as the wealth of Midas. Her father, a shipping clerk, had never received over twelve dollars a week.

A sudden, terrible thought choked back the question the answer to which must kill her.

Had Bruce's sterling honesty broken down under the long strain? Had he hungered and hungered for things beyond his means until the hunger grew irresistible? Had the sight of money in vast sums always before him—other people's money—

No, she would not doubt him. She would not allow herself to think it. And yet—

"Oh, Bruce, give it back—quick!" broke from her lips involuntarily.

Bruce laughed.

"Give it back to whom—the brokers?" Her suspicion did not anger him; her alarm only amused.

Her fears were only increased. Brokers—stocks! That was what they all did. Only, Bruce had won.

"Oh, Bruce!" she cried again; but the other things that she meant to add seemed too terrible to utter.

"Don't you think I can get a little money without stealing it? This is just as much mine as the twenty-five dollars wages I got to-day," he said.

She waited for him to go on. Speech had deserted her.

And he told her of Wheelock's loan and the manner in which he had acquired a small fortune.

To his surprise it did not cheer her up.

"Why did he lend you all that money?" she asked.

It was the question he was persistently driving out of his own mind.

"I don't know. He's taken a sudden fancy to me, I guess. I'm going out to his place for the week-end to-morrow. He's going to take me out in his boat. Oh, I tell you, it's pretty soft after all these years of grind."

Her fears were relieved in a measure. But, from then on, conversation lagged. Another thought had taken possession of her.

For five years Bruce had given her to understand that only his utter lack of means to support her prevented immediate marriage.

For the past six months they had waited only for the day when he would have paid the last of the undertaker's and doctors' bills.

Now he had money to marry her more easily than they had ever dreamed. He could go out and buy the little place at Sunnyvale and have enough left to make a snug nest-egg against a rainy day. Besides he had his salary raised by more than half.

But Bruce no longer wanted the little place at Sunnyvale. He uttered no hint

of hastening their wedding. Did he really want her?

He talked on and on about the wonderful details of the great event. He talked of future prospects. He spoke of only the immediate future; of speedy promotions which might come, of other chances to increase the small fortune he had so suddenly acquired.

He spoke of motor-cars as a possibility, of a trip to a real theater, of an occasional run to the shore for a day. Of their marriage not a word.

By and by it penetrated even his overexcited brain that he was doing all the talking. Ellen did not seem to be rising to his enthusiasm. Why, she looked as if she were sorry he had got the money. Then he thought he understood.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed. "You're not still thinking about that swamp-lot and shanty—and chickens, are you? You don't mean to say you'd rather live that sort of life?"

Somehow she could not make the answer that her heart dictated; could not tell him that she would gladly live the poorest of lives with him. Her lip trembled a little. She was silent.

"Well, I'll be—hanged!" he exploded, reading his answer in her silence. "Say—"

But he did not say it. Long living with his sick sister had taught him not to talk when his temper was rising.

"Aren't we going to eat any of that candy?" he abruptly changed the subject in manner to express the sentiment of disgust beyond words.

Hurriedly she opened the box, held it out toward him. He took one of the chocolates, paused with it half-way to his lips.

She knew he was about to demand if she were not going to eat, too. She forestalled the question by taking one of the sweets.

"They *are* good," she murmured with an effort; she felt as if the stuff would choke her to death.

She offered the box to her mother. Mrs. Randolph made an apology of not caring for candy, born of long practise in giving up things to others.

But Ellen could not eat another. The box stood there, its first tier broken only by the two chocolates they had taken.

"Well, why don't you eat some more?" Bruce asked.

"I—I'm not feeling very well this evening, I guess. We're so busy down at the store that I just swallowed my lunch, and—"

"You'd better go to bed," Bruce told her. He failed to conceal the fact that he was not wholly sorry of an excuse to be going.

On Sunday morning Ellen went to church. It is doubtful if she heard much of the sermon or attended to the prayers in her book. On Sunday afternoon she went three times into the tiny living-room of the flat. The third time she took from the mantel a number of bright-colored catalogues sent by middle Western lumber dealers with a new scheme for building cheap houses.

She carried them to the kitchen. She opened the top of the cooking stove. The fire was nearly out, for the Randolphs ate a cold supper after the Sunday midday dinner. She raked a few dying embers together.

Then she took the bottom catalogue and tore it apart so that it would catch fire more easily. Swiftly she thrust the leaves into the stove. Then she took the next from the bottom and the next. She opened the damper to draw the smoke up the chimney.

One can get a lot of these catalogues if he wants to. Ellen and Bruce had accumulated a baker's dozen. The little pyre made quite a burning.

The next to the top one was that which showed the hardest wear. As she tore it up a page caught her eye. She separated it from the rest, looked at it a long while. Once she reached to lay it on the kitchen table. Then she took it back and fed it into the stove.

After all, she herself had found a bunga-

low in the new one that suited her better than the one their minds had fastened on six months before. But she threw the new one into the fire without troubling to tear it up at all, and then put the lids back on and returned to the sitting-room.

"Why, Ellen, you're not crying, are you?" her mother asked quickly.

"I—I was burning some old papers," Ellen hastened to explain. "The smoke got into my eyes."

No, dear reader, let us not get sentimental over anything so utterly dun as burning red catalogues in a homely kitchen stove. That would be too foolish. Let us turn to pleasanter things.

At that moment Bruce Evans was deciding that the cockpit of Wheelock's motor-boat was a trifle cool, in spite of the warmth of the June Sunday. Miss Wheelock had gone into the tiny cabin half an hour ago.

"Cold?" the girl spoke as he entered. "I was awfully cold out there. Come over and sit here. It's the warmest spot I can find."

The sun was shining in the starboard windows as their course lay, and would fall full upon the backs of those sitting on the cushioned seat, of which she herself took a good half. Bruce managed to get himself into the other half. He was of slight build, anyhow.

CHAPTER X.

THE CARES OF RICHES.

OF course he got the dinner-suit; and was glad of it when he discovered that two other young men had been invited to join the family Saturday evening. Of course he discovered that a silk outing-shirt was not a silk dress-shirt, and that there were studs and things all carefully prescribed by people with nothing better to think of than dress.

These things he had had to procure before starting on Saturday afternoon. Procuring them and a five-pound box of candy left him some change over four dollars. He wished he had not let a spell of reactionary economy prevent his getting permission to go up to the Twentieth National and draw some more cash. It was only now that Sunday was drawing to a close without his having had to part with so much as a dime that he was feeling easy on that score.

They dined at a yacht club-house inside Stamford Harbor light. The afternoon had continued to grow chillier, after a morning heat that had fooled them out of wearing sufficient wraps.

"You two had better go home on the train," Wheelock advised. "Clifford and I will take the boat back all right. Get off at Port Chester and you will be able to find a taxi. I'll telephone for one, that will be better yet. You don't want to take cold, either of you."

"Me for the train," Jessie cried eagerly. "Booh! I'm half frozen. I thought we'd never get to these bright lights and some warmth. I'll never go in that boat again without a fur coat."

Bruce's first sentiments were of hearty accord. Jessie had had the benefit of a spare oilskin. It had seemed to him that his light serge coat was a little colder than nothing. He had worn no vest.

Then came other sentiments. The railroad fares and the taxicab would be up to him! A young man has to be sure that every one knows he has money before he likes to admit that for the moment he hasn't. He would have given several times two hours of his time for the chance of a word with Wheelock and getting a small check cashed. But Wheelock came hurrying from the telephone booth.

"There's a train at eight-ten. The next is after ten. If you hurry you can catch it. There's a car now," he cried as he came. And there was nothing to do but run for it.

The only vacant seats were at the front of the car. The motorman had his windows open. The front door stuck badly enough so that none of the passengers getting off made more than a feint at closing it. Before half of the twenty-

minutes' run had been accomplished, Jessie gave a shivering little shrug of her shoulders.

"I hope there's time to swallow a cup of coffee," she said.

Bruce hoped there wouldn't be. Then a heavy touring-car stalled on the track and raised his hopes. It should have done the contrary. They reached the Stamford station at eight-fifteen, and for once a New Haven train was on time.

"I don't care," Jessie spoke in a voice that made it hard for him to keep from cuddling her in his arms then and there. "It's warm here, and we can get some coffee."

"Don't you want some cakes or something to go with it?" Bruce felt obliged to ask. Coffee alone seemed lacking, to his mind.

"Have you any crullers?" the girl asked of the waiter.

Bruce was sixty cents poorer for the coffee and cake. An hour and a half still remained after his investment had been consumed. Something had to be done; there was nothing better to offer a girl than eating candy. He had two dollars and ten cents in his pocket when candy and tickets had been procured.

"How far is it from Port Chester to White Plains Manor?" Bruce asked, as the cause of his extravagance nibbled at a chocolate mint.

"I don't know," she told him. "It must be eight or ten miles." Then she chuckled happily. "I got pinched once for trying to make it in fifteen minutes with dad's car. I told the judge I thought the motorcycle officer was trying to flirt with me as I went by, and put on speed when I saw he was pursuing me."

"Did you get away with it?" Bruce inquired to cover up a shudder.

"Of course I did," she answered, with a laugh at the recollection.

Bruce wished she were going to deal with the taxicab. Ten miles and two dollars! By the time the train had come and jerked them over the eleven or twelve miles of stops and starts he was in a frame of mind to make conversation all but impossible.

He recalled that Wheelock had telephoned for the cab to meet the train that had gone. Two hours of waiting on top of ten miles!

The taxi was waiting when they got there. No sooner had they crossed the platform than a stocky-looking individual stepped up. Bruce had been hoping for a young man from whom he might expect enough sympathy to enable the negotiation of a check. This was a converted cab-driver of the original type.

"Mr. Evans, sir?" he inquired with that servant-to-master manner which is so pleasant when you can pay for it.

"Yes," Bruce admitted, and they got in.

Bruce could find but one thing to be grateful for, as they bowled over the road. Jessie, having covered a yawn with one of her dainty hands, admitted that she was so sleepy she could not talk or think. Since she did not talk, he did not have to try to.

How was he to manage? Could he get Jessie into the house before he began the argument with this substantial-looking and round-headed chauffeur, who drove carefully, almost cautiously, and would be careful and cautious about his pay? What would the fellow do? What could a chauffeur do when a fare failed to "come across" at the end of a ride?

The car slowed up, halted. Bruce pulled himself together.

"You run right in and get warm," he advised Jessie, as he helped her from the cab. Then he commenced his well-planned bluff. He had made up his mind deliberately to pretend to have lost a ten-dollar bill.

"How much is it?" he asked with a stupendous effort at easy nonchalance.

The man was smiling, but looked bigger and burlier than ever. Bruce braced himself for what was coming. It came:

"I don't know. Boss didn't say. He'll charge it to Mr. Wheelock's account, I reckon."

Once more Bruce needed physical bracing against a mental shock. He steadied himself by leaning a second on the mudguard. Then it slowly permeated his brain that the fellow still stood with the expectant smile on his face.

Bruce thought an instant. He was not accustomed to giving tips; his goings and comings had not hitherto taken him where men expected them.

Then he suppressed a gasping "Oh!" of comprehension. He pulled out the two one-dollar bills, peeled off one, and handed it to the burly man. The man muttered a thank-you, and clambered onto his car.

It was all over; another dread emergency had not arisen at all. But Bruce resolved never to be caught short of cash again. Such shortage held too embarrassing possibilities for a man of—

Oh, yes, he was a man of an entirely different sort from the one who, three days ago, had stood and decided that he might as well spend his last nickel for car-fare, since his next ride was likely to be a free one in a patrol-wagon.

He was a different man all around. He was a man who could give dollar tips.

He rather wished he had given the fellow both dollars. Anyhow, he would have to get Wheelock to cash a small check for him yet to-night, since there were the two maids to be tipped in the morning.

A different man! He was not a poor, fresh-air patient for Jessie Wheelock to treat kindly. He was to be counted, and she gave evidence now of counting him, as one of her regular acquaintances, her friends.

In fact, there was no use denying that she was flirting with him just a little, and letting him flirt back again.

Of course it was nothing more than flirtation. And yet—why not? And the thought of Ellen Randolph stabbed him.

No, he would not prove himself one of those cads who change their loves as soon as their circumstances improve a little. Ellen was a good, fine, loving woman. She should share his good fortune as she had been willing to share his poverty.

Only—did she really want to share it? Would she know how to share it—how to live the new life which he was beginning, which he intended to keep up? Ellen in a nifty little motor-boat; Ellen in a taxi; Ellen moving about such a home as this! Oh, Lord!

No, he wouldn't allow himself to think about Ellen that way. It was unfair, disloyal. He was not going to show himself a fool whose head got turned by a little money. He would never desert Ellen.

But, for a man on the crest of prosperity's wave, he spent a very uneasy night, wondering just what he was going to do with Ellen before and, still more, after marriage. Certainly her absurd regrets for a chicken-plot on the edge of an ash-dump were about the limit. And yet, wasn't it particularly the sort of thing she was cut out for?

And it certainly was not the sort of thing for which he was made. He had found his sphere, the place to which he belonged. He couldn't afford to get married, anyhow, for several years. When he did marry he wanted enough to make a real home—such a home as Wheelock's.

He was still pondering these things when motor-car and subway had got him and the cashier to the bank again on Monday morning. They upset him in his work throughout the morning. He came very nearly giving a man an extra ten-dollar bill in the hour he spent in the teller's cage.

He smiled when he thought what a catastrophe that would have been—once. Back at his books he pulled himself together and made some headway for an hour or two. Then, half an hour before lunch, he became conscious that he was about to become the center of something of the kind of absurd sensation his new clothes had caused on Saturday.

Adams had come back from some errand to the teller's office. He paused a moment to whisper to Travis. Travis whispered to Beecham. Both were glancing at him occasionally. Then Meyer came through on his way to lunch.

"Say, old sport," he whispered, "I just cashed your check for five dollars on the Twentieth National. Was it all right?"

"Yes," Bruce managed to answer.

He wondered if his hesitation was noticed, if his start showed in his face. Meyer could not have startled him more by telling him a detective wished to see him in the lobby.

"Things must be looking up your way, eh?" said the assistant teller.

Bruce pulled himself together. After all, he had a perfect right to have money in the Twentieth National.

"Oh, I've had a little bit up there for this long while," he spoke with a steadied voice.

"You old miser!" Meyer exclaimed with a laugh. "Here, you've half-starved yourself for years and money in the bank all the time. But why the deuce didn't you put it in the savings department?"

"I wanted it where I could draw on it occasionally," Bruce replied. He felt as if he were being cross-questioned.

"But you never did," argued the teller. "Look at all the interest you lost."

"Who said I didn't?" Bruce demanded.

"The check was numbered one," answered the other.

Bruce felt himself growing red. It was as if the other were accusing him of lying.

"Well, as a matter of fact, I did have it in the savings department," he now asserted. "I changed it last Friday."

He wished he had thought of that in the first place. He eyed Meyer, though it cost him an effort to do it. Meyer's face was one of those heavy, round faces that are hard to read.

"Decided to blossom out, eh? Oh—I know the answer. She was in this morning, too. But I thought you said you were engaged—or—

"Great Scott! Say, you're not engaged to Jessie Wheelock, are you?"

"Lord, no." Bruce could reply easily to that. He could breathe more easily now. They had got off the dangerous ground. "I never met Miss Wheelock until last Monday."

"And spending your hard-saved money for glad rags already! Say! It took quick with you, didn't it? But what about the other girl—the one you're engaged to? You want to look out or she'll be getting wise. Gee! Evans, I never knew you had it in you."

Meyer was using the teasing tone in which all the men had passed remarks about his new raiment Saturday morning.

"You go to the deuce," Bruce ordered good-naturedly.

He was greatly relieved that there were no more questions about the account in the Twentieth National. And then there was one:

"It's a wonder you wouldn't patronize your own bank. Don't you know it gives a fellow a drag to have a few hundred thousand on deposit? If you'd kept all that money here, you might have Wheelock's place by this time."

Meyer was teasing now. Bruce laughed in unison with Beecham, who had come up in time to catch the last words.

"Say," he answered. "I told you where you could go, didn't I? If you don't hurry up, you'll miss your lunch."

Meyer went out chuckling. The laughter died on Bruce's face the instant he was gone. Had it not been for Beecham he would have given vent to something very different from a laugh.

Why in the name of all evils did his very first little check have to come romping through the Ironclad Trust Company on its way back to the bank on which it was drawn? Now they all knew it. Now they would all be wondering about it.

Well, Meyer would pass them the word he had just given. Only—was Meyer quite convinced of his tale's truth? Had he shown his alarm over the assistant teller's announcement of the check? Had Meyer noticed it? Would Meyer get to thinking it over later in that slow brain of his, and grow suspicious?

Well, he had only broken one of the rules; he had done so with the advice and aid of the cashier. Wheelock and Mercer had both admitted doing the same thing.

Both seemed a bit reticent about it, though they had not hesitated to tell him on what was really but very slight acquaintance. Their previous relations with him hardly constituted acquaintance at all.

What had he to be afraid of? Why was he afraid? What ailed him, anyhow, that he must go up in the air over every little thing?

He had gone half crazy over that lost check, and there had been no excuse for worrying at all. Last night he had been silly enough to get worried about the chauffeur of a taxicab, and it had turned out all right. And now—

But he did wish that check had not taken this route home.

Travis came back from lunch. Bruce went out. He decided to feed himself a decent meal. He went to the café at which he had lunched with Wheelock. Just inside the door a dozen men were leaning over each other's shoulders in an effort to see the tape of the little ticker that stood there.

"A hundred and three," one of them whispered, in a tone that might well have answered for funeral use.

"Good Lord!" the other gasped, shaking his head sagely.

"Here she comes again," a man close up called out to those behind. "Hundred and three and a half."

"Holy mackerel!" shouted a gray-haired, wrinkle-cheeked individual.

Bruce joined the group. Hating to appear too utterly outside the circle, he refrained from asking what the soaring stock might be. Since most of the men had limited time for eating, the crowd was a shifting one. Evans had no difficulty in working his way to where he could glimpse the tape.

"Here she comes! Here she comes!" cried the self-constituted announcer. Bruce peered over his shoulder as the figures rolled into view, and the loud voice lowered a little: "The same. Rotten work—rotten work!"

"What do you want—the earth?" laughed another.

"Ten points at a clip would suit me all right, clear up to the sky," the reader returned. But Bruce hardly heard him. He had seen the tape and read himself:

200 TUB BRS 103½.

He forgot decorum in his haste to get out of the group and to a table. Since the dazing wonder of the results of his stock transaction had lost its sheer fright for him; he had been able to figure out just what had happened in that transaction, even to the question of the interest and commission he had had to pay.

Now, on the back of the *menu* he did some more figuring. The results took away his appetite for the meal he had ordered. If he had stayed in—if he had held on—if he had kept his hundred and ten shares of Tubular Brass until to-day, right now, instead of being worth a little less than sixteen hundred dollars, he might have but a hundred or so short of seven thousand!

What had ailed Wheelock? Why had the cashier told him to get out?

Oh, well, a man could not be blamed for wanting another to play safe with money he had loaned for the game. But—a hundred and three and a half—almost seven thousand dollars!

"Hello, Wheelock! What do you think of it?"

Bruce looked up from his figures. He had taken a seat where he could watch the interested crowd around the ticker. The Ironclad's cashier had just come into the place; another man whose appearance indicated about the same degree of prosperity had greeted him.

Wheelock, with an afternoon edition of a newspaper in his hand, pressed through the crowd for the last-minute information of the ticker.

"Does it mean anything to you?" the friend inquired in a voice that choked back hurrahs of sheer jubilation.

"Oh, I guess it means a town house for next winter all right," Wheelock chuckled in a tone as jubilant. "I told you that tip was all right. And it's going higher. I'm

going to hold for a hundred and ten. Had your lunch?"

The friend led the way back toward the tables with the high backs like that at which Bruce had taken his first lunch with the cashier. Wheelock suddenly saw Bruce. He paused.

"Sorry you're so far along with the feed," he said; "liked to have you join us."

Then he glanced down at the futile figuring Bruce had done.

"Just figuring your losses, eh? It *is* tough. I got scared out at fifty-seven and an eighth. If I'd held on—I hate to think of it! I had twelve hundred and didn't make ten bucks a share on it. What do you know about it?"

His tone was as mournful as Bruce was feeling.

But Bruce dropped his eyes. He was not ready to show one thing that he knew about it, which was that, one way or other, Mr. Howard Wheelock, cashier of the Ironclad Trust Company, had lied colossally.

CHAPTER XI.

A LONE HAND.

BRUCE forgot his worry about the little check which showed the employees of the Ironclad that he had an account in another bank. The fact that he had failed to make a perfectly possible five thousand dollars was too much more serious.

Of Mr. Wheelock's utterly irreconcilable statements he did not know just what to make. There was the possibility that the cashier had merely bluffed with his friend in the café. Yet it would seem a foolish manner in which to bluff—to announce one's intention to purchase a town house when every one could find out eventually that the house did not materialize.

On the other hand, there might be some reason for lying to a man who had followed one's advice and lost by the following. There might be reasons for telling another man to play safe with one's money when one was willing to take larger chances with his own.

Bruce knew well enough that the loss of what he now had would not worry him nearly so much as the loss of Wheelock's twelve hundred would have done. Wheelock may have taken that into consideration, may have wanted to make sure that his protégé made money whether he himself did or not.

There was the bare possibility that the cashier felt a fatherly responsibility which would not risk the utter turning of a head by too great a gain at once.

At all events, he would not give heed to the feeling of suspicion which seemed to awaken at every turn in the strange events which had followed his hint at the favoritism holding Mercer in his place. He had done enough suspecting, without any ground for it. Everything thus far indicated a perfectly straight, friendly interest. It was simply ungrateful to suspect a friendship so highly beneficial and beneficent because he could not comprehend its grounds.

After all, it occurred to Evans, business men appreciated smartness. That was a thing he had never shown until he had revealed his discernment of the cause of the head-bookkeeper's position. He had heard a story of a concern which advanced an employee because he had been clever enough to steal from it and hide his defalcations until he won the money to repay them. Maybe his break of a week ago had awakened appreciation of his brain-power.

At all events, a greater interest had taken hold of Bruce Evans than the questioning of his superior's motives or contrary assertions. He had missed the opportunity to make five thousand dollars. But that opportunity had existed. The thing was to find another opportunity—and not to miss it.

Instantly Mercer's club flashed into his mind. It had not been far from his thoughts since the sudden evaporation of Thursday night's terror into Friday morning's tremendous surprise. He had suf-

fered qualms of conscience over such extravagance each time he had all but decided to go to Mercer and ask that his name be proposed for membership.

Now he perceived that the expense of the club was only to be regarded as wise investment. Chase was there; Mercer was there.

However big or little results they got out of it, Mercer and Wheelock had both known of the same tip on Tubular Brass, and it had been a good one for any one who had followed it. Mercer had spoken of Chase as the source of his inside information. Chase certainly was in a position to know anything that could be known. Bruce lost no time about approaching Mercer.

"Surest thing you know," the head-bookkeeper responded cordially to the request for proposal. "Glad to do it. But, say—were you in on Tubular Brass? I thought all these glad rags must point to something."

"I was in and out again," Bruce responded. "I cleaned up sixteen hundred, but I might as well have had six thousand."

"Just what I did," Mercer groaned. "Only I got out without cleaning up anything. But I'll have you up before the next meeting of the directors of the club. They meet the first Saturday of each month."

Bruce felt intense disappointment. He had hoped that he might be made a member that evening somehow. Last Saturday had been the first one of June.

"No, hold on," Mercer bespoke a sudden recollection; "there won't be any meetings now until September. They cut out July and August—most of them go away in summer, you know, for the week-ends, if not altogether. Too bad you didn't tell me Saturday morning."

Evans was crestfallen. He managed to hide some of his disappointment under a fairly lightly spoken—"Gee! I wish I had."

"But that won't hinder your coming there to lunch any time you feel like it. In fact, if a man puts up the initiation fee in advance, he can even take a room in the building, while he's waiting for the directors to pass on him. There's nothing rigid about the club, you know. It's not like the Union or the Knickerbocker."

Bruce was relieved again.

"I didn't know there were rooms to it," he spoke with a fresh interest. The room he had occupied Saturday night at Wheelock's home had set him wondering if there were any real reason why he should stick to Mrs. Lundrom's cheerless accommodations.

"Oh, yes, it's a regular club. A lot of the unmarried fellows have rooms there. They're thinking of putting up a couple more floors. Everybody's getting rich these days, you know."

Bruce suddenly recalled another of those "proper things to do" which were so novel to him.

"Got anything on for to-night?" he asked.

"Sorry, but I have," Mercer responded lightly. "Where were you going?"

"Oh, I was going to let you choose. I thought you'd know better than I would what's worth seeing."

"In that case, I'll advise you anyhow. I've seen it two or three times, but for any one who hasn't been there, it's hard to beat the 'Foolish Virgins.' The music's swell, and the girls—gee! It's some show. If I was free, I'd take a chance on it again myself, anyhow; and it takes a real show to get me up in front of the box-office three times."

"Guess I'll take it in," Bruce decided.

He had not thought of any entertainment of any sort until it had occurred to him to do his part in the new friendship he was establishing with the head-bookkeeper. Now he realized that no special reason kept him from enjoying the evening alone.

He had rather felt that he would go to see Ellen. Somehow the thought did not appeal much. Of course he might take Ellen to a show. He decided against it.

Ellen would want to go to something serious and heavy, if it could be found at this season. He needed something light and cheering!

"Just get a good look at the little blondie second from the right end of the 'Foolish-Happy' chorus, if you go," Mercer suggested. "And hold your head in both hands, so you don't lose it."

Seven-thirty found Evans at the window of the Comique's box-office, with a long line behind him. The place, he had learned when he looked it up in the papers to get its address, was a roof-garden.

"What have you got?" Bruce asked, as he had once heard a man of apparent affluence inquire at another box-office where he had been waiting to buy a twenty-five-cent ticket.

"Anything you can get; how many?" said the clerk with a quick snap in his voice.

"One."

The clerk slapped down a ticket. Bruce had visited the Twentieth National before returning to his own bank after lunch. He laid a crisp five-dollar bill on the glass. The clerk pushed out the ticket and three dollars in change. Evans suppressed a gasp.

Time had been when he would have shoved back the tickets at a nickeldrome before paying ten cents apiece as a holiday price. Now he just took the ticket and change and headed for the elevators, after the rest of those in front of him.

Half an hour after the show began he wished he had his money back. He felt that he would have been cheated at a quarter for his seat.

The costumes looked immodest to him, and the dancing would have appeared sheerly suggestive of indecency to a man more experienced than himself. He was serenely oblivious to the fact that the very immodesty of the show was what he had paid his two dollars for.

The music seemed largely lost in the conversations that went on all about, mostly between men, and a good deal of it disgustingly coarse. At the end of an hour he was thinking seriously of relinquishing his claims to the rest of his two-dollars' worth, and going home.

He was thoroughly bored. Even the smartness of the overdressed people around him had lost its interest.

Then he caught a snatch of the conversation of two men behind him.

"Heard anything more about American Chrome?" one asked.

"Yes, I did," the other replied. "I guess it's the real dope all right. I was talking to Chris this afternoon, and he says he had it straight from a fellow that's head-clerk or something at Kuhn Loeb's. There was some talk about the Germans' buying up the whole plant and putting it to sleep if they couldn't use it; but the Chrome people held out for too big a price; and there's a forty-million-dollar order all done but the signing. Must be leaking, too. Chrome went up half a point just before closing."

Bruce grew suddenly interested. He was overhearing a tip on the market. He listened, forgetful of all notions of the propriety of eavesdropping.

"Did you buy any of it?"

"I told Rumford to get me a hundred if he could under thirty. Ah—here she is!"

Bruce looked up at the barefooted white savage who now gyrated from the wings, and, with a sweeping bow and a kiss blown at the audience, began a dance. He could have cursed her for breaking in on the conversation behind. From then on he heard and saw little but the conversation of those two men.

He forgot Mercer's admonition about the second from the right in the "Foolish-Happy" chorus, did not notice that that particular chorus was in progress until it was ended. He wasted few regrets on her.

"I think I'll take some Chrome myself," he heard again.

"It sounded all right to me," came the response. "Anyhow, I think it's worth a seven-hundred-dollar bet. How'd you make out in Tubular Brass?"

"All right. Wish I'd had a thousand of it. I was so deep in copper that I couldn't take more than twenty-odd shares. Looks now as if I'd got in at the top of copper instead of the bottom. Serves me right for thinking I was wiser than anybody else. But I'll get out whole, I think."

Bruce glanced at his program. The act on the stage was the last. People were making the preliminary moves of departure. He got up quickly. He wanted a look at the two men behind him more than he wanted anything he had seen or would see of the show.

As he left the seat he managed to sweep them with a backward glance that appeared to seek the exits.

They were plump, prosperous-looking men, men of Wheelock's type. Bruce decided that they would do for him. He got outside and walked nearly half-way to his boarding-place for the purpose of assisting his brain in planning a course of action.

He was ill-prepared for availing himself of a tip, he decided. He hardly knew how to go about the purchase of any stock, save as he had done it before. It occurred to him that he might get Chase's address at the club. American Chrome had jumped a point before closing. The time to get in would be the moment of opening.

Should he have to wait an hour or two before he could get off, Heaven only knew how much he might lose.

Yet he was more than half afraid to put matters to the touch. He finally decided to begin with Wheelock. By calling up the cashier he could get a little advice, and incidentally return the favor done him to the extent of giving Wheelock the opportunity of the tip.

All he got for his money on the long-distance call to White Plains Manor was a conversation with the same foreign-voiced Katy who had failed to deliver his message ten days before. The Wheelocks, it seemed, were right in New York, presumably at some roof-garden show.

Bruce stood puzzled. He did not like to call up Chase without giving the broker's manager some action for his trouble. It was after eleven. He concluded that there would be more and better time for calling up to-morrow morning. He could get Wheelock then, too. He went to the boarding-house and to bed.

He made up his mind to move to the club immediately. He must be in touch with Chase, must be where he could be reached by telephone at least out of business hours. He had plenty of time to make up his mind. Sleep was long in coming.

He was dreaming even with his eyes open, dreaming of motor-cars, dancing, good dinners in nice eating-places, a decent room in a decent place—all the things he told himself he had missed long enough already.

He saw himself in Wheelock's office. While he was about it, he considered the possibility of his becoming the president of the bank. Stranger things, he told himself, had happened.

There was but one discordant feature in the pictures he painted for himself. It was so much easier and pleasanter to imagine motoring, dancing, dining with Jessie Wheelock than with Ellen Randolph.

He tried quite resolutely to fit Ellen into the pictures. She was not made for them. She more than half spoiled his enthusiasm for the whole lay-out.

But of course he would marry Ellen. He was not thinking of marriage, anyhow. Jessie Wheelock was not thinking of marriage. She was merely admitting him to the circle of those she regarded fit to flirt with.

Under the circumstances, he hoped she had nothing serious in her pretty head about him. If she had—he was quite sure she was one of those passionate natures who would take disappointment in love very much to heart. He hated to think of it.

So he thought of the business of to-

morrow, wondered what Wheelock would think of American Chrome, wondered what Chase would be able to do in the way of putting through a sale before the great rush would begin. He had no doubt that the knowledge of the two men at the show was shared by plenty of others.

At last he went to sleep, figuring how much he would make on a hundred shares of a stock bought at thirty—he had got a paper and found that American Chrome Steel was selling at closing for twenty-seven and a half, but was willing to face bravely the misfortune of having to pay thirty for it—if the stock went up to par.

He called up Wheelock's home at eight the next morning. He got Mrs. Wheelock, who was a bit sleepily snappish until he told who he was, and then expressed deep regret that her husband had remained in the city over night in order to be up early and attend to some business in the morning.

She gave him the telephone number of the hotel. Wheelock had left the place five minutes before he called.

Once more he hesitated. Supposing the tip were wrong? Suppose he lost his seven hundred dollars?

Well, he would still have over eight hundred in the bank, enough to do better with something else. Somehow the thought of losing seven hundred dollars failed to arouse as much terror as the thought of losing seven hundred cents would have caused him a week before.

He called up the club. It seemed that Chase lived there. The operator sent some one to page him from the dining-room, when she found he was not in his room. And Chase came to the phone.

It took a minute to make the broker's manager remember him. Then Bruce inquired:

"Have you heard anything about American Chrome Steel?"

"Yes," Chase answered promptly. "Have you?"

Bruce told of the conversation he had overheard. "What do you think of it?" he asked.

"I heard something of the sort myself," the other admitted. "Of course it's hard to tell about tips these days. Chrome went up a point last night on the strength of that story. If it came from Kuhn Loeb's, it's right from headquarters. I didn't know where the story came from."

His voice sounded more hopeful than the words themselves.

"Want some of it?" he queried.

"Well, would you advise it?" Bruce demanded.

"Oh, now you're asking me to break the rules. If I told you to buy it, and the tip didn't pan out, you'd be sore at me. I'm hoping to know you better, not worse."

"Then you don't think it's a good buy?" To say that his tone was crestfallen puts it mildly. Bruce had felt as if he had discovered a gold mine.

"Now you're getting me wrong again. I only said I couldn't tell you what to buy or what not to buy. I wouldn't tell you to buy Standard Oil at ten a share. But I'll tell you what I know about American Chrome; which is, that it's about as low as it will ever get, unless the company fails entirely. And I don't know of any danger of that. American Chrome is a going business and has some good men in it. It's capitalized at five million in fifty-dollar shares."

Evans was up in the air. He wished Chase would be more definite; wondered if that was the best the manager would do for friends like Mercer. If Mercer's account of his trading in Tubular Brass was true, Chase had not done any wonderful tipping in that case.

"Say," he suggested, "even if there isn't anything in this war order, isn't the stock likely to take a jump just on the strength of the rumor?"

"I've seen many a stock move twenty points without any better reason," was the reassuring response.

"Well—if I get a check in your hands by half past nine, will I have a chance at a buy right at the opening, before the stock changes much?" Bruce inquired.

"Certainly. We might even do better than that by you. Our exchange members may know another broker who will sell outside. That's often done, you know. It's possible that we're carrying some stock for some one who wants to sell it. I'll be in the office by half past nine, nine o'clock as a matter of fact. I'm starting right away."

"I'll be right down," Bruce announced, and hung up the receiver.

After it was all settled and done, he began to have the misgivings. He had paid out a thousand dollars on a very slight intimation of a chance to multiply it. All told, he was not sure that his own impatience had been more responsible than his judgment.

He watched for Mr. Wheelock's arrival at the bank. He hoped that the cashier would be early, that he might cancel the order if Wheelock advised it.

But Wheelock was half an hour late. Bruce lost no more time in getting to him.

"Mr. Wheelock, did you hear the story that's going around about American Chrome?" he asked.

The cashier frowned. Then, "Yes," he said slowly, "I heard there was nothing to it. I wouldn't load up with any of that stuff if I were you."

(To Be Continued.)

Some Dog

by William Alfred Corey

"T AIN'T the grave of a human person, mister; it's a dog's grave," a passer-by, seeing my curiosity, paused to inform me.

I had stopped in my walk along the little suburban side street to inspect, just inside a picket fence, what looked like the neatly rounded and well-kept grave of a child; for it was certainly too short for that of an adult. Then, stepping closer and peering over the pickets, I had read on the clean, white-painted headboard, about and over which a honeysuckle was growing, the carefully though clumsily lettered, "In Memory of Captain Bright."

"Well!" I was commenting to myself, "the captain must have been a short man. Queer place to plant him, too, in a private back-yard."

But the passer-by, a resident of the neighborhood, evidently, explained it. It was a dog's grave and Captain Bright had been his name. Certainly.

"Old Newt Meaney lives there," my informant went on, indicating the big,

rambling, old-fashioned house with an ancient rose-vine climbing up its side and sprawling all over its weather-worn roof, "Newt an' his old woman. Thought a heap of that dog, Newt did. More 'n he did of some of his own children, *I* reckon. 'Cause some of his family ain't any too much credit to the old folks, 'specially the boys. But that there dog, Captain Bright, surely was some dog. Newt 'll tell you all about him if you encourage 'im just the least little bit. Well, so-long, sir. Fine day."

And my acquaintance of the moment passed on.

The dog mourner must have seen or overheard, for at that moment a little, shriveled, mackerel of a man opened the back kitchen door of the big house and came out. He was in his shirt-sleeves; he wore a faded straw hat, and his lean, clean-shaven jaws Fletcherized tobacco like a steam dirt-shovel.

"Howdy, stranger," he called out cheerily, coming toward the picket-fence where I stood.

By way of explaining my presence I glanced at the grave.

"The last resting-place of a faithful four-footed friend, I am told," I said, pointing. "He must have been a remarkable dog."

Newt Meaney came close to the fence. He aimed a liquid projectile at a clod of dirt, then rolled his quid to a convenient place under his sunken cheek.

"Remarkable?" he repeated in a tone which implied that I had fallen far short of choosing a strong enough adjective. "Remarkable? Remarkable ain't the right word at all, mister. That there dog was more 'n remarkable. He was *some*."

Then the old man went to a small gate a few steps away and opened it.

"Come in, stranger," he invited. "Come in an' rest a spell, if yuh don't mind."

I didn't mind, so I thanked him, and presently we were seated in comfortable, old-fashioned chairs in the "best room" of the homey old house. A pleasant-faced old housewife nodded a greeting to me and then quietly withdrew from the room.

"Chaw?" proffered Newt Meaney, finding a thick, golden plug in one of his pockets and holding it out.

I declined but smiled my thanks.

"Smoke, then?" he persisted, reaching for a jar of tobacco on a shelf at his elbow.

I had my own pipe and pouch with me, but, to promote comradeship, I accepted his tobacco, and soon, enjoying the weed which is the coin current of good fellowship the world over, we were conversing as though we had known each other years instead of minutes.

"Yes," the old man resumed, taking up again the subject of the dog, "Capt'n Bright—some of us called 'im Capt'n an' some Bright, though he was both bright an' a dog captain—was some dog. He was one dog in a million, yuh might say."

"What breed was he?" I was interested to know.

"Breed?" Old Newt Meaney dropped a cataract of tobacco-juice into the cuspidor by the side of his rocking-chair and laughed. "He was mostly just plain dog. Of course *I* think he was more collie than anything else. Had the collie p'ints—big body; thick, shaggy brown hair in front; slim legs, pointed nose an' ears. Mighty affectionate, too, like a collie; though that's true of most any breed if yuh use 'em right.

"But I guess the Capt'n had a dash of wolf-hound in 'im also, just to give 'im a good fightin' edge, like pepper in the oyster soup. As for that, though, he may have had a little bull in 'im, too. He sure had a bull's stayin' qualities in a fight. Some of the boys used to claim that he was part greyhound, but I never could see it, though I'd wager my ole hat that Cap had more 'n a drop of shepherd. But underneath all them breeds ole Capt'n had a good, wide streak of still another mighty useful breed—just ordinary yeller.

"You see, here's my idee about dogs an' their breeds. Of course pure blood's

all right, but there's individuals as well's breeds. Pedigree don't cut much more figger in a dog nor it does in a man. There's dogs with blood so pure yuh c'n see through it, an' what can chase their ancesters back to the canine Adam, an' what air wuth all kind of money to weak-minded men an' society women, but what, in actual dog values, ain't wuth the pizon it'd take to kill 'em. And there's just common scrub dogs that's so good an' useful an' true that if they ain't got souls God made a mistake.

"An' it's the same way with men. There's men that hide their no 'count-ness behind a lot of great, great grands; an' there's men whose dads was hung for hoss-stealin' an' whose mothers boozed an' swore, an' yet for all that they was as clean as sunshine an' as true as a oak-tree. It's all in the individual. Nature's a wise ole bird. She c'n start with some mighty ornery material, when she has to, an' show some darn good results at the finish."

"And your dog died of old age?" I guessed, curious to know how the dog that was "some" had come to his end. "And you buried him on your own place so as to keep alive his memory?"

"Old age nothin'!" grunted Meaney. "They thought he had hydrophoby. It was this way. Capt'n was a-gittin' old an' I'd give 'im the run of the place an' divided my pension with 'im. I'm a ole soldier, yuh see. I'd set aside five dollars a month fer Capt'n's benefit to buy 'im just the right kind of meat an' to make 'im comfortable in his old age, an' with nothin' to do but lie in his kennel at night an' bask in the sun daytimes. The children was all growed up an' gone, an' Capt'n was about all me an' the ole woman had left.

"Well, there was a kid youngster down below here, a pesterin', teasin', no-'count young un, that was allers a-comin' up here an' botherin' the ole dog. He'd roll over Capt'n when the dog wanted to sleep an' dream in the sun. He'd throw sticks an' stones at the pore ole feller; he'd pull Cap's ears an' poke 'im in the ribs an' do all kinds of devilment.

"Capt'n stood it, patient like, as long as he could till one day, just to teach the kid a little manners an' decent respect for old age, he up an' snapped at his tormentor. He hardly drew blood on the boy's leg; hardly left a mark that you could see with readin'-glasses. But you ought to have heard the holler that that kid an' his folks raised!

"'Hydrophoby!' they shouted. His mother throwed a fit, an' in no time they had a yard full of doctors. Of course nothin' ever happened, an' that howlin' brat never lost a meal.

"But they sure had it in for pore ole Cap, an' the first thing I knowed here come a couple of policemen an' says, says they, 'Newt, you'll have to kill the dog.'"

Old Newt Meaney paused here a moment while he got a big, red bandanna handkerchief out of his pocket and wiped something out of the corner of one of his eyes. Then he emptied his mouth into the cuspidor, shifted his crossed legs, cut a corner off his plug, and went on with his story.

"Say, mister," he said with emotion, "that was the hardest thing I ever tried to do. Of course I had to tell 'em I'd do it. Hard as it was for me, I wasn't goin' to let *them* do it for fear they'd bungle it an' give ole Capt'n a painful death. So I promised 'em I'd put 'im out of the way m'self; me who had never laid the weight of my little finger on 'im in violence since the day the boys brought 'im home as a pup full fifteen year ago.

"Hardest thing I ever tried to do, mister, an' I could scarcely bring m'self to do it. Why, sir, I might as well have shot one of my own flesh an' blood. Didn't I remember all the years he'd a-been with us? Didn't I remember all the service he'd been to us? Come here, stranger."

The old man arose and led me to a window.

"See all that stretch of residences?" he waved, indicating a newly but thickly built-up portion of the town beyond a

small intervening valley depression. "When I settled here twenty year ago there wasn't a house in sight over there; nothin' but scrub oak an' underbrush; a hant fur coyotes, bob-cats, and other varments. Great place fur fires in the summer, too. Not much more in the other direction neither.

"We was the first settlers around here. Ranched it—live stock an' grain. Capt'n helped when he got big enough. Why, that air dog saved me the wages of a mighty good ranch hand for years. An' he never asked fur a raise in pay, an' he never went on a drunk, an' he was always on the job, day an' night, holidays an' Sundays included. I could trust 'im with almost any kind of business except signin' leases an' renewin' the mortgage."

We went back to our chairs and my entertainer went on.

"Once about this time of year," he said, "we was havin' our first all day an' all night rain of the season. Thinkin' Capt'n 'd be more comfortable inside, we'd had 'im sleep in the house. Two or three hours before daylight the dog got restless an' woke my ole woman up. He went to the window, sniffed several times, growled a little once, then went back to his sheepskin. A few minutes later he repeated the performance. When it was mornin' the storm had cleared, but before sunrise Capt'n scratched at the door an' asked to be let out.

"Pretty soon we heared 'im a-barkin' around the barn, an' I went out to see what the matter was, thinkin' it might be some varmint after the chickens.

"But it wasn't no varmint. Somethin' worse. The heavy padlock on the barn had been forced, the door was open, an' both Dick an' Jim, the hosses, was gone. To make it worse, the pourin' rain had washed away every track, so's not a footprint of man or beast was left to show the direction taken.

"After a hurried breakfast I an' the boys started out to git the *posse* together. The outlaws had visited my nearest neighbor an' a wuthless old mare was the only piece of hoss-flesh left 'im. But nobody had taken his three boys an' they scattered to give the alarm. It was past noon before the *posse* got together. We picked up the trail as best we could an' started.

"Well, sir, as we rounded a bend a few miles over the ridge we heard the snappy bark of a dog. I knowed it was Capt'n, an' I wondered where he'd a-been.

"But I soon found out for a-comin' through the underbrush was Dick an' Jim, their halters a-hangin' an' themselves covered with mud, with Capt'n a-snappin' an' a-barkin' at their heels. They'd been tied in some barn or shed, an' Capt'n had gnawed their ropes loose an' was a-drivin' 'em home.

"An', sir, Capt'n done more. He led the *posse* to a shed concealed in the brush where the other stolen hosses were tied, then trailed to a hidden cave three of the thieves, who was nabbed an' given their medicine. Now, wasn't that clever?

"Then there was the time I was taken with a stroke. I an' Cap was alone in the house at the time, the ole woman an' the kids bein' down to my brother Tom's, twenty miles below here. It happened in the middle of the night an' in the middle of another howlin' winter rain. Good luck Capt'n was with me again in the house—fur company.

"Well, Capt'n, seein' me helpless an' in pain, come to my bed an' whined an' fussed over me like a woman. Then a sudden thought seemed to strike him an' he run to the telephone. The kids had teached Capt'n how to take down the receiver with his teeth an' bark into the mouthpiece. Ole Doc Cleaver, who lived three miles from here, was a particular friend of ourn, an' he'd answered Capt'n's call many a time, the dog a-barkin' into the mouthpiece, then listenin' fur the answer with his ear to the receiver a-layin' on a chair.

"Central was onto the trick an' always made connection when she heard Capt'n's call. But this time Capt'n couldn't git no answer, the storm havin' blowed the wires down. So off the dog rushed through

the storm, an' inside of three hours here he come a-bringin' Doc back with him.

"But the biggest stunt that he ever done was at the time of the brush fire over there across the *arroyo*. There was fires all around us at the time, an' every man about here was away fightin' a big blaze up to Pine Tree Gap. Nobody had noticed this new fire, an' before you could say scat there was a red line a-comin' down through the chaparral an' scrub oak. The *arroyo* run water in the summer, but in the winter it was powder dry.

"Well, sir, my ole woman an' the kids—the big boys was all with me—thought their time had come, an' the neighbors around here thought the same.

"But Capt'n didn't think so. Not on your lodge policy. Capt'n remembered the flume an' reservoir a couple of miles above here where a company was gittin' ready to irrigate some orange land to the south. Capt'n didn't do a thing but beat it for that reservoir. Once there he dug an' pawed an' tore at the big sluice-gate with his teeth till he loosened it an' let the water out. Then, a-barkin' like mad, he tore down the *arroyo*, keepin' just ahead of the water.

"He beat the fire by about two minutes, they say, the stream a-spreadin' out an' meetin' the flames with a hiss that could be heard a mile an' a-sendin' up a cloud of steam an' smoke that could be seen for twenty. Capt'n saved not only this ranch an' the lives of our folks, but the hull neighborhood as well. Didn't I tell you to begin with he was some dog?"

I couldn't deny it, and presently we were outside the house again and I was standing over the Captain's well-marked, flower-bordered grave and looking down with genuine respect, when old Newt Meaney, coming close, spoke again in a low voice.

"I told you the merciful killin' of ole Capt'n was the hardest thing I ever tried to do," he said, "That's so. It was so blamed hard I couldn't do it, *an' I didn't*. I took 'im into the woodshed an' fired a bullet through the roof. Then I put Capt'n out of the way in a good, safe hidin'-place an' give 'im the biggest chunk of liver he'd ever see. I dug this here grave to fool the neighbors an' the cops. It's his grave, all right, but he hain't moved into it yet. An' he won't till he dies like a Christian."

NEW YEAR'S LEAVES

SO brittle and so fragile are
The New Year's leaves I turn,
They're very apt to break in two;
But annually I yearn
To start anew in January
With resolutions honest, very!

Thus every New Year heretofore,
As everybody should,
I've resolutions made galore
To prudent be and good;
But being good's a lonely road,
With wakened conscience for one's load!

Therefore with careful thought I've planned
A different course this year.
'Tis this—to make no promise that
Might conscience cause one tear.
Having decided not to make any,
'Twill be too easy not to break any!

Mazie V. Caruthers.

Daring the Danger Zone

by Norcross Forbes

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS ALREADY PRINTED.

WHILE traveling in Egypt, Gerard Derby receives a letter from his father, in reply to one from the son in which he has mentioned his enjoyment of the society of Gladys Hayden. The father makes it quite plain that henceforth the son must shift for himself, all that he can expect to receive being a thousand shares of the I. O. U. mining stock, one of the few bad investments the elder Derby ever made. He tells Gladys frankly his prospects, and she as frankly states that only misery, in her mind, can follow marriage with a poor man. So he sets sail for the United States, and after various vicissitudes and in spite of a warning against certain mysterious Vampas in the neighborhood, he determines to look up his I. O. U. mine for himself.

Meanwhile, Nancy Gale, whose father has left her in the hope of raising money to hold the mining claim he had staked out, is without word of him, and is rescued from the clutches of West Symmonds, of the neighboring Esperanza mine, by Derby, who arrives on the scene in the nick of time. He thereby makes an enemy of Symmonds, but determines to protect Nancy to the death. Her father, it appears, owns the other shares in the I. O. U. mine, and in exploring the workings, Derby drops into a mysterious passage, where he is set upon from behind and felled by a sweeping blow from a three-foot drill.

CHAPTER VIII.

BY A HAIR'S BREADTH.

SLOWLY consciousness returned to Gerard. He had lost all sense of time. It might be minutes or hours since he had been felled. His first feeling was of irritating nausea; quickly this was predominated over by the throbbing ache of his head and the duller ache of bruises on his body.

His eyes slowly opened and gazed uncomprehendingly at the rocky wall beside which he lay. He raised himself on his elbows and, pressing his knuckles to his temples, fought with the haze that crowded his brain for the clue of memory that would tell him where he was and what had happened.

Everything still whirled about him; fragments of his past life hummed in his mind with ludicrous lack of connection; incidents of years before stood out clearly as though released by the blow from the storehouse of memory. He lay back and closed his eyes.

This story began in the November Argosy.

"Why is it dark? Why is it dark?" he kept repeating to himself.

Then the name Nancy Gale kept crowding into his consciousness.

"Nancy Gale? Who is she? Why should I think of her?"

As a child would do, he kept reiterating the name.

Suddenly, like a ray of sunlight struggling through a cloud, rationality returned to him.

He remembered his descent into the shaft, his fall. Painstakingly he went back over the events of the day.

"I was walking down a drift," he told himself. "I remember the ore tracks; then something hit me."

As if in answer to his self-questioning, he heard a voice far away down one of the drifts say:

"Are all the men of the shift out?"

Somehow the voice sounded strangely familiar.

"Yes," came the answer in a voice to which he had no clue.

"Well, then, fire the shots whenever you are ready. I connected the battery myself," rejoined the first speaker.

This time Derby recognized the voice. He was a brave man, but when he knew that it was West Symmonds who held him in his power he shuddered, for he felt that his doom was sealed.

He had seen enough of him to know that he was not a man to do a "half-way" job when it came to disposing of an enemy.

"Why didn't he finish it when he struck me with the drill, though?" he mused.

He flung his arm out from him in a gesture of despair. It struck upon a wooden box. He groped inside it and felt a round, paper-wrapped stick. Then the whole diabolical scheme flashed upon him.

After the shift had left the stope and loaded the holes Symmonds had dragged him from the spot where he had attacked him and laid his body against the breast of the stope that had been drilled. There would not be enough left of him to be noticed by the "muckers" when they cleaned up after the shots.

It was a beautiful revenge and perfect in that there was and could be no evidence.

He plunged to his feet, the fever of excitement lending him strength. He pressed against the wall of the stope, swinging his hands madly up and down, in great sweeps like a swimmer, groping for the wire of the exploding battery.

All about him lay Stygian blackness. The sweat rolled in streams from his face. Again he heard Symmonds's voice:

"Hurry up! What's the matter?"

"In a minute, boss," he heard the answer. "Just wait till I tighten up this connection."

Gerard made one more futile sweep with his arms. His fingers failed to touch the longed-for wire. Then for no reason, except a wild desire for action of some sort, he ran madly into the surrounding darkness.

Each step he expected to crash into a wall of the stope, but to his surprise he met no resistance. He flung out his arms and each hand touched rock. He had stumbled upon the entrance into a cross drift!

The shattering roar of the explosion behind him made the whole tunnel quiver, but not one of the hurling fragments of rock penetrated his shelter. He groped his way ahead, every sense aquiver with the necessity of the fight for life. The tunnel grew more and more narrow. Soon he crawled on hands and knees. Then at last the tunnel stopped short.

Grimly Derby retraced his way. When he again reached the stope it was dimly illumined by the light of candles and clattered with noise as shovels struck on rock and ore was piled into the metal wheelbarrows by the mucking gang.

Derby waited in the shadow of the cross-drift, watching the wheelbarrows being loaded by the fantom shapes, then disappear echoingly down the drift that must lead to the shaft.

"If Symmonds's gang find me here I might as well have been blown up!" he muttered to himself. "My only chance is to get to the shaft and wait for some chance to get up to the top without being seen."

Seizing a moment when the men were working in the far corner of the stope, he slipped across into the main drift, then hurried in the direction where he hoped the shaft lay.

He made his way along with reckless speed, heedless of possible pitfalls. He had not gone more than a hundred yards when he heard a shrill whistle behind him and the sharp rumble of a wheelbarrow being pushed toward the shaft.

He flattened himself against the side wall and the mucker as he hurried along the drift passed so close that he almost touched Gerard. The latter held his breath, afraid to stir an inch until the man was well beyond him.

Three times, as he worked his way toward the shaft, he was passed by men coming through the drift, but so intent were they on their own conversation that they did not notice him, though the light from their candles brought his figure into relief.

At last he reached the part where the drift ran into the bottom of the shaft. He leaned out and looked upward.

The "skip" used to hoist the ore was down, and he could see up the length of the shaft. At the top, where he had expected to find light, all was intense blackness except for a tiny speck of yellow where the shaft mouth focused upon a star.

He realized that he must have been under ground far longer than he had thought and that it was night. Hearing the rattle of a wheelbarrow being run down the drift, he cast about for a place of concealment. Just in time he noticed by the light of the candle that burned by the shaft entrance a pile of oilskins on the ground, and hurriedly hid himself beneath them.

Raising a corner of one of the slickers a fraction of an inch, he peered out and watched the men slide the ore into the skip.

The fragments of their conversation that he caught convinced him of the wisdom of his concealment. They were speaking of a dynamiting "job" that they had "pulled off" in San Francisco and gloating over the protection and immunity afforded to them by the Vampas brotherhood.

As Derby watched them a possible method of escape came into his head. He knew that on the bottom of the skip there was apt to be a shackle ring for convenience in handling. He noticed with joy that when the men had filled the skip and given the signal to hoist they walked away from the shaft without looking backward.

When they had gone he slipped from his place of concealment and lowered himself carefully into the shaft. His feet struck water by the time he had gone down half his length, and he realized that his hope was true and that the drift he had been in was at lowest level.

He let go his grip with his hands and slid into the water, which was up to his neck. He heard the bell to lower, then gradually the darkness above him grew blacker as the skip descended. When it came within arm's length above him he reached up his hand and grasped the shackle ring.

To his horror, the skip kept on descending, and when it came to a standstill was only a few inches above the surface of the water. He doubled himself up and tried to force his nose into the narrow crack of the air space, but without success. He gasped and strangled for breath. A moment more and he knew that he would have to die of suffocation like a rat in a trap.

His ear-drums ached with the pressure of the water. There flashed through his mind, even amid his desperate struggles, the realization that this was the end. And yet while he fought to retain consciousness for a few precious seconds more, his

thoughts were not of himself but of Nancy.

There resounded the ring of metal on metal, as with a clattering and bang an armful of " drills " was thrown into the skip. Then there came a terrific jerk upon his wrists and he felt himself being pulled rapidly upward as the skip was raised.

Unnoticed he clung to the bottom of the thing and was drawn above the mouth of the drift unobserved by the men who had thrown in the drills. The shackle ring was small and cut his fingers till it seemed as if they would be severed from his hands, but he hung on desperately.

His body swayed from side to side of the shaft like a pendulum with the least rocking of the great bucket. Half-way up the shaft the agony of the strain of holding on made death itself seem small beside it; but will conquered body, and he clung still.

Just as his fingers stiffened and started to slip, unequal to further endurance at the almost superhuman strain, the skip shot above the earth's surface into the night.

Derby put his last ounce of strength into a swing that rolled him clear of the shaft mouth and down upon the side of the ore dump. Here he lay, weak and panting, until he could gather his strength.

Above him myriads of stars shone peacefully in the sky. He gazed above him in wild unbelief until he could force his consciousness into the realization that he was saved.

Down in the valley twinkled the lights of the Esperanza camp, and the still night air carried clearly snatches of drunken song and the music from a dance-hall.

Fortunately for Derby, the smelter and slag dump were at the other side of the hoist shed from the ore pile upon which he had fallen, and the shed and tramway trestle shielded him from the glowing flashes of light that lit up the entire valley whenever a load of molten slag was poured forth.

He remembered the night of his arrival watching the glow of the Esperanza in the sky from the steps of Nancy's shack, and realized that in the course of his subterranean wanderings he must have come straight through the mountain which separated the Esperanza from the I.O.U.

He knew that a steep path crossed this mountain, but, feeling the hopelessness of trying to follow it for the first time at night, he resolved to strike down into the valley for the main trail, although it made the distance around a good five miles.

Selecting the moment when the flash from the slag dump was just subsiding, he slid down the ore pile and, making a wide detour to avoid the tents of Esperanza, struggled toward the valley and safety.

Time and time again he tripped over some great rock. His clothes were torn to shreds by the cactus and mesquite thorns, but, sliding and struggling, he at last reached the main trail. Exhausted as he was, he broke into a dog trot, resolved to lose no time in getting back to the I. O. U. He was desperately worried as to what might have befallen Nancy during his absence and he forced his aching body to make all the speed it could.

When he staggered up the last hill he saw to his relief the light burning clear in Nancy's shack. As he drew nearer, the collie came bounding to meet him, barking joyously and waving a welcoming tail.

Nancy greeted him with a sob of relief.

" I have prayed for your return," she said simply. " But I had given up hope. I feared that you too had paid with your life the penalty for trying to help me."

" Not this time!" answered Derby, breathing hard but with a struggle for cheerfulness.

" *Not this time!*" echoed Nancy, and her thoughts ran back to the ominous message printed on the card tied around the neck of the collie when he came back to her from Esperanza.

" Oh!" she cried, " will there never be any end to this persecution—and when you spared his life?"

"I think he hates me for that more than anything," said Derby.

CHAPTER IX.

AN INTERLUDE ON LOVE.

WHEN Derby had told his story he sat for a few moments in silence, his head wearily thrown back upon the cushion. The blow upon his head must have been a glancing one, else it would have killed him; but it had left a throbbing pain which still caused him intense suffering.

Now that the excitement was wearing off, his nervous strength was lessening.

Nancy watched him anxiously, fearful lest in spite of his reassurances he should have suffered more serious injury than he realized.

Derby stubbornly refused to go to bed, insisting that he would be all right in a short while. Gradually the pain in his head grew less and though he ached in every bone of his body he insisted that he felt better for talking with her than he should if he lay down.

"By the way, Miss Gale," he questioned suddenly, "how are we going to arrange for the mailing of those letters to New York?"

Nancy smiled a bit wanly.

"Don't you think, Gerard," she said softly, "that after what we have been through together, you might call me just Nancy? As for the letters, we have had to-day the one piece of good fortune that has come in a long time. Pedro, the half-breed, came into the camp while you were away. He was badly in need of money and looking for work. I told him that there was nothing for him; then I thought of the letters. I promised him two dollars if he would carry them to Independence and mail them there. I more than suspect that all of the mail from here that goes out on the stage from Esperanza is examined by Symmonds."

"How will you know that Pedro really mailed them?" asked Derby.

"I gave him a note to the postmaster at Independence in which I asked him to give a receipt for the letters to Pedro."

"Clever girl!" exclaimed Gerard.

He thrust his hand into the pocket of his coat in search of a match and felt there a slip of paper. During his wanderings beneath the Esperanza he had picked it up and slipped it into his pocket. He drew forth the paper and looked at it with idle curiosity.

It was an envelope addressed to Drew R. Benedict in Regal.

"Never heard of the gentleman," he murmured. "Odd that it should have got into the Esperanza mine."

He suddenly noticed the stamping on the envelope. "Registered. No. 19876." The letter was postmarked: "El Paso, Dec. 14."

He turned the envelope over in his hands, looking for the stamp of the post-office of arrival. There was no such mark.

"Is your letter interesting?" queried Nancy.

"It may be *very*," he answered. "Nancy, what was the date of the mail hold-up near Regal?"

"December 17 or 18, I think. Why do you ask?"

He showed her the envelope.

"I found this in the Esperanza mine. That letter was registered, but was never received by the person to whom it is addressed."

"How do you know?"

"There is only one postmark on it. What better place could Symmonds and the Vampas have for hiding their booty than in the mine? I believe that a search there would give the secret service the clue they have been groping for. If I am right we are saved."

"Symmonds and his crowd would never dare bluff out a search. They are in too deep. No wonder they are not keen about having strangers enter the mine, to say nothing of the fact that they are stealing our ore."

Nancy nodded her head excitedly.

"If when Pedro comes back we can

send another letter out with the clue that the secret service has been hunting for, there should be a Federal posse here within a week."

Gerard seated himself at the table and wrote a long letter to the office of the nearest postal inspector.

"If that gets through," he exclaimed as he sealed the envelope and threw it on the table, "we shall probably win out. When should Pedro be here?"

"Not until to-morrow. The trail is bad always to Independence, and it is worse than usual now."

"Are you sure that your father never recorded his location of these claims?" Derby asked. "If the records are all right we could leave the mine in perfect safety. With the discovery which I have made of the old shaft, there is no question as to the amount of assessment work, and I think that back in the East, on the strength of the deposits which I have actually seen, I could raise all the money we need."

Nancy shook her head doubtfully.

"Just before father left he mailed the papers to the recorder; but he mailed them from Esperanza. From what we know now, there is very little chance that they ever left there. We never received any acknowledgment. Still — if you want to go—"

She looked at Gerard imploringly.

"After all," she thought "why should a man who is really almost a stranger to me make such sacrifices as he has made, and why should I expect him to go on making them and taking still further risks after such experiences as his in the Esperanza mine?"

Derby interpreted her glance quickly.

"It was only of you that I was thinking," he replied. "If we leave now and the location has not been recorded, every location notice on the place will be torn down within an hour after we have gone and there will be plenty of Symmonds's witnesses who will swear that they were never posted. I do not know what to do," he went on perplexedly. "You ought not to stay, yet you cannot leave alone."

Nancy tossed her little head determinedly.

"I can answer the question for you. Whatever happens I am going to stay."

Gerard's face lighted with admiration.

"All right, comrade! Have it your own way! You know the risks. After what I have seen of you I know that you will face the music; but, after all, such risks were made to be borne by men, not by girls."

Involuntarily, as he spoke, he thought of Gladys Hayden. He asked himself how she would have acted in such a situation. He wondered whether her personality would survive and how it would thrive amid the rough and ready realities of such an existence as this.

He still loved her, or thought that he did, which amounted to the same thing, yet in all frankness to himself he was obliged to admit that she never would have stood face to face with fate as unflinchingly as Nancy Gale had done.

Nancy had meanwhile drawn her chair in front of Derby and was gazing at him with a charmingly direct frankness.

"You say risks should be borne by men and not by girls," she repeated, "but tell me this: Would you ever wish to marry a girl who would not stand by your side in danger? Is not that quality the one which you would require first and foremost in a friend? Could you ever feel that a person who did not possess it was a comrade?"

Gerard was startled by her remark, which had unconsciously fitted in so closely with his momentary reflection.

"I do not know that I ever thought of it in that way," he answered. "I suppose a man never really does know just why he falls in love."

"I have seen so little of the world," went on Nancy, with a sigh, "that I do not know much about love. I had always supposed there must be some good reason for it.

"I have been brought up in such a

strange way for a girl," she continued. "My mother died when I was a small child, and since then I have lived with my father in any camps to which his life as a mining engineer took him. We have lived in South America and Mexico and in the north in Alaska. I have known hundreds of men, and many of them have said that they were in love with me."

Nancy's manner was so ingenuous that Derby forebore to smile.

"Yet I have never known what love really was. I suppose that a girl who has been brought up in a normal way sees so many men whom she would be willing to marry that the only trouble is in selecting one from among them."

This time Derby did laugh, but not in a mocking spirit.

"Well, Nancy," he responded, "I have known hundreds of girls brought up in what you call the normal way, but very few of them seemed to know so much as you do about the subject of love and the qualities which it demands. As for their falling in love, I know that they have not fallen in love with me anyhow!"

"Were you never in love yourself?" asked Nancy.

Unconsciously her heart beat a little faster as she asked the question.

"I asked a girl to marry me once," Derby answered gravely.

"What did she say?"

Gerard rose and knocked the ashes of his pipe out in the fireplace.

"She said a good deal, but it could be mostly boiled down into the one word: 'No.' She said that she cared and all that sort of dope; but she could not see life with a poor man in terms that tempted her to undertake it. I do not know that I particularly blame her."

"If that is the way in which a girl properly brought up looks at life I am glad that my education was neglected!" exclaimed Nancy. "However, in a few months you will either be rich, or you can try your fortune somewhere else."

"Or more likely still," added Derby, "I may be where nothing will matter much."

As he spoke, his eyes were scanning carefully the entrance to the little shack.

"Is there any entrance to your bedroom except through this room?" he asked abruptly.

"No," answered Nancy, with a questioning gaze.

"Then this door is all that will need guarding."

"You did not mind, did you?" questioned his companion timidly.

"Mind?" he replied, puzzled, "mind what?"

"My question about love. You see I —I rather wanted to know.

"Of course I did not mind," he answered.

A sudden wave of tenderness for this lonely little girl swept over him.

"You poor child! If you are ever in love you will know all about it, and you will not need to ask questions of any one. But the problem before us now is your immediate safety. At the speed with which events have moved in the last few days I do not dare leave you unprotected, even though I were only fifty yards away. Those miscreants might come during the night and I not hear them. I think if you do not mind I will sleep here."

"Do whatever you think best." Nancy spoke with a childish confidence which touched Gerard to the heart.

He rose and limped to the door and across to Moran's shack from which he took some blankets and returning, spread them upon the floor. Then he took down Mr. Gale's rifle from the wall and laid it beside the improvised couch.

"There," he declared with grim satisfaction, "they may get in, but not until after there has been a pretty fight."

"If it should come to that," said Nancy, "you would not fight alone. You would find me by your side and this" (here she tapped the revolver in her belt) "would give a good account of itself. My father taught me to shoot

straight, and I can put a bullet through a hat at fifty yards."

Derby looked at her gravely, silently. Then he spoke with emphasis:

"Nancy, if you hear any struggle in here, stand with your back against the bolted door. If you detect the faintest touch from the outside on wood or handle, you may know that I am down and out. Then — then shoot yourself and make a clean job of it!"

Nancy Gale raised her clear eyes, and a look of fine scorn lay in their depths. There was determination, without bravado, in her tone as she answered:

"That may be your code. It is not mine. There are different kinds of honor. If I let a man who was fighting in my defense fall without a sign of help from me I should feel more disgraced by such voluntary cowardice than by anything that could happen to me against my will. Don't worry, however, I promise to keep one bullet for myself. But don't let us shake our nerve by looking back or forward. It is hard enough just from day to day, isn't it!"

"Yes," rejoined Gerard, "it is hard enough from day to day; but, Nancy, I didn't know that there was as plucky a girl as you in the whole world. It is worth walking all the way from San Francisco just to see you."

"Men have told me that before now," Nancy smiled with a touch of her old coquetry which not even all her misfortune had been able quite to crush out.

After she had left him Derby took from the pocket of the coat which he had not worn that day a couple of letters and a small round photograph which the pawnbroker had removed from his watch. Tearing them into small fragments, he piled them on the hearth and touched a match to the heap.

He could scarcely have accounted to himself for the satisfaction with which he watched the things burn.

On her side of the door Nancy was sitting, looking into her bit of cracked mirror by the feeble light of her candle.

"He said," she reflected, "that if a girl were in love she would be sure to know it. I wonder—if I—am."

CHAPTER X.

A TEST BY TORTURE.

THE night passed without any molestation from West Symmonds. In the morning Gerard went down to the corral to feed the horses while Nancy was cooking breakfast.

The bright sunlight made his experience of the day before seem almost an impossibility in looking back on it. With some difficulty he caught Nancy's pony, which frisked about the corral, refusing to let him approach. The pinto which had belonged to old Patrick stood quietly in a corner, head hanging sorrowfully.

"I almost believe the old boy knows that his master is dead!" mused Derby, as he walked over to him and reached for the rope about his neck. "And yet some people claim that animals really know nothing!"

Holding the rope of the pinto in his left hand, he vaulted upon the back of Nancy's pony and rode out through the gate of the brush corral to water the horses down in the hollow. While the animals buried their noses in the cool stream he rolled and lighted a cigarette, whistling softly.

Suddenly the horses raised their heads and their ears pricked forward. A moment later Derby heard the sound of a horse's hoofs approaching on the trail from Esperanza which crossed the gulch a few yards above.

He dropped his hand to his pistol holster. The unknown rider suddenly rounded the bend, and on seeing him, reined his horse up on his haunches.

Derby's gun flashed from the holster and covered the man whom he saw to be Symmonds.

The latter's sinister face turned pale, as though he had seen a ghost.

"*You,*" he gasped, "*you!*"

Gerard well knew the cause of the other's amazement, for he realized that to Symmonds he must seem as the dead come to life.

The fellow, however, mastered his emotion in an instant, and dismounting came slowly forward with his hand outstretched.

"I don't blame you, stranger, for keeping that gun ready after what happened the other evening," he said. "You can put it up, though. I just sort of came up to apologize. I had been drinking and I did not know what I was doing. I came up yesterday to try to explain; but I could not find you."

Derby stared at him hard. He realized that Symmonds had no reason to think that he knew who his assailant in the mine had been, and he felt that it was as well to keep the information to himself.

He dropped the gun to his side, but did not return it to the holster.

"Thank you for coming to explain," he said dryly. "I would not come too near these horses if I were you. They both kick."

Symmonds bit his lip till the blood almost came. Then silently he remounted and rode away.

Derby watched until the horseman's figure stood out on the sky line where the trail dipped for the last time. Not until then did he slip the automatic back into the holster.

Later in the day Pedro returned and stolidly held out the receipt from the postmaster. Gerard paid him the two dollars which had been promised to him by Nancy; and then went into the shack to find his letter to the postal inspector.

"Did you meet any one on your way back from Independence?" he asked of the Indian boy as he came out with the letter in his hand.

"Meet him, Symmonds," grunted the latter.

Gerard whistled between his teeth. "Did he say anything to you?"

"Him ask me where I been."

"Did you tell him?"

"Yes," nodded the boy stolidly.

"How much did he offer to pay you to give him the next letter which you received to mail for us?" asked Derby sharply.

Not a muscle in the Indian's face moved.

Derby reached forward and took the boy's hand.

"Come, Pedro," he said in a soft voice by which one who knew him better would have been warned. "How much was it?"

"Him say nothing."

Slowly Derby bent back the little finger of the boy's hand. It was brutal, but it was no time for niceties.

"How much?" he repeated softly, leaning over and peering into the Indian's eyes. Steadily he pressed the finger back until it almost bent double. "How much?"

With a shriek of pain the boy yielded.

"Ten dollars!" he shrieked.

Derby released the boy's hand and slipped the letter back into his pocket. He stepped back into the shack and brought out a Winchester rifle. The boy's eyes shone greedily as he looked at it.

"Here is another letter," said Derby grimly. "If I get an answer to it you shall have that rifle. If I do not—" He tapped the barrel meaningly. "Will you mail it?"

The boy reached out for the letter.

"Me mail," he muttered. Then he swung himself onto his lean pony and galloped off.

"It is taking a chance," thought Derby, "but it has to be done."

His optimism was justified, however, when the next day Pedro rode back into camp and proudly showing his receipt demanded the rifle. Whether because Gerard's treatment of him was in accord with tribal precedent or simply because the boy was lonely, a singular affection for Derby seemed to have sprung up in his sullen young heart and for two days he stayed about the camp, helping with the

work and following Gerard almost like a shadow wherever he went.

From him Derby learned many of the strange Indian myths about the neighborhood. Of the ghost cliff where on moonlight nights fantom war parties were supposed to steal along, of the snake's bowl in the mountains where according to him all the snakes in the valley retreated at night. To these legends Pedro added vague tales of some deposit of virgin copper once known and then lost sight of.

Three days passed in safety while Nancy and Gerard waited impatiently for some result from their letters, although they knew that it would require far more time than that for them to be even delivered.

One ominous event only marked the quiet of this period. On the morning of the third day they found Bruns, the collie, lying dead outside the shack. The stiffened jaws and limbs told their own story of poison.

Nancy was heart-broken over the death of her pet. Gerard felt the loss no less severely from another point of view. He realized that the dog had been an invaluable guard for them at night. Moreover it worried him that their enemies should have been able to scatter poison about without being observed.

He redoubled his watchfulness, resolved that no matter what happened he would not be taken unprepared.

Although all was quiet on the surface, Gerard knew that the next move in the game with Symmonds would not be long delayed. The brief respite perplexed him. As for Nancy, her spirits rose and she grew daily more hopeful.

CHAPTER XI.

AT THE NEW YORK END.

DICK CARRINGTON savagely threw aside the papers on which he had been working, and strode over to the window. He looked out at the gray walls of the Tombs prison which, in his capacity of assistant district attorney for New York, he was trying his best to fill with erring humanity.

"What a rotten existence this is!" he reflected. "Here I spend all my days bullyragging witnesses, listening to complaints of every crime in the penal and moral code, till I cannot imagine that there is such a thing in the world as a decent side to human nature!

"I wish that I were in old Gerard Derby's boots, with nothing to do except travel around the world at my father's expense, sit in the sun in pleasant countries, and see people only on their decent side," he mused.

When he had finished for the day he pressed the button for a stenographer, and as no one responded immediately, he stepped out into the gray-floored reception-room, shouting indignantly for a clerk.

The little group of witnesses and suspects looked at him respectfully. He brushed past them haughtily with the contempt which the machinery of the criminal law entertains for its cogs.

Carrington was a thoroughly pleasant and amiable fellow in his ordinary private life; but the arrogance of authority is a thing that few people brought up in a democracy can resist.

As he strode back through the room, having delivered his indictments to the stenographers, old Dan, the postman, entered and flung down the last mail on the telephone desk.

"Hello, Dan," greeted Carrington carelessly. "Anything for me?"

"Yes, Mr. Carrington, I think there is a letter for you. I am glad to see that you got a conviction in the Nicolazza case. He must have been some crook."

Carrington extracted his letter from the pile of mail and withdrew into his office.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, "it is Gerard Derby's writing. Odd that I should pick it up now when I was just thinking of him. What on earth can he be doing in such a God-forsaken place!"

Carrington pondered on the problem as he glanced at the postmark while slitting open the envelope. "I shall be glad to read something that has nothing to do with crime anyhow."

He leaned back in his chair and began:

DEAR DICK:

You will probably be surprised to receive a letter from me sent from this jumping-off place, when the last time I wrote you I was in Egypt. As you may have heard through some of the crowd, dad decided all of a sudden that the gilded life for yours truly should cease—and it has.

For six months, ever since I got back to the States, I have been knocking round trying to make an honest living as laborer, cowboy, surveyor's dog, and the Lord knows what. I say an *honest* living, not knowing how far the strong arm of your official position may reach, and shall say nothing about the crimes which I have been committing in the interludes of honesty.

I came down here looking for a mine called the I. O. U., in which my father, with a burst of generosity, gave me some shares as ballast when he turned me adrift. I can appreciate father's generosity better now that I am here and find that the whole mine is not worth more than "two bits," as they say hereabouts.

All of which brings me to my point. There is a girl out here—

"Oh, there is, is there?" commented Carrington. "I might have known that there was some reason."

—whose father, Edward Gale, started for New York three months ago and has not been heard of since. And I am wondering whether there is any investigation that you could make through your detectives, who seem to be able to find out anything in the heavens above, the earth below, or the waters under the earth. I know it seems a fool thing to ask, when we don't even know that he reached New York. But the girl is, naturally enough, desperately anxious, and I thought that there might be some record of a disappearance.

She says that he is fifty years old, clean shaven, wears glasses, weighs about one hundred and fifty pounds, and is somewhere about five feet ten or eleven in height. When in New York he generally stays at the Breslin or the Belmont. If he reached the city at all, it must have been about September 20 or so.

From what Miss Gale tells me, her father was of exemplary character (of course, she would say so anyhow; but I guess he was), so I don't think it probable that the White Way, *et cetera*, has claimed him. He has been having a lot of trouble out here with a prize character by the name of West Symmonds, who, from common reports, is a murderer, and in general a bad *hombre*, who would make many of your New York gunmen look like amateurs. He has been making love to Gale's daughter, and when I first arrived last night almost put me out of business when I intervened at a time when he had her in his power.

"Just like Gerard to leave out all the interesting parts!" thought Carrington, observing that the account of the episode ended with the paragraph.

The reason why I speak of Symmonds is that there seems to be some talk out here about a mysterious organization called the "Vampas," which is operated on somewhat the same general line as the Black Hand. An old miner tells me that this Symmonds is the head of it.

From something that Symmonds said the other night, Miss Gale has formed an idea that these men may have something to do with her father's disappearance. This is probably foolishness; but the whole thing is so vague that I want to give you all the facts I have.

I am sorry to trouble you, old man; but if there is anything you can do, it will be appreciated by the latest recruit to the working classes,

Your old friend,
GERARD DERBY.

Had the letter been written a day later Gerard could have supplied Carrington with a crime picture that would have satisfied even his jaded appetite. As it was, Carrington lit a cigarette and blew several smoke-rings toward the ceiling meditatively.

"I wonder if Gerry thinks that I run a Russian spy system here and know all about every traveler who enters this den of iniquity? How in thunder does he imagine we can do anything on that amount of information!"

However, in spite of his mental remonstrances, Carrington made a memorandum to have a detective call at the hotels which Gerard had mentioned in order to

see if anything could be gleaned in regard to the mystery.

After slipping his note-book back into his pocket, he rose and put on his coat preparatory to leaving for the evening. He grinned as he smoothed out his coat collar.

"Too bad Gerry's father has turned crabbed; but it is funny to think of the old boy as actually working."

It was a wise man who said, "There is something about the misfortune of our friends that is not altogether displeasing to us."

Just as he slid down the roll-top of his desk his door opened and Corrigan of the investigation bureau tramped heavily in to report.

"We got that Eppsteen gang to rights," he said. "Sadie put me onto the place where the stuff was and we nabbed them when they came in."

"Good enough!" commented Carrington. "Tell me all about it in the morning! I have to hurry along now. Oh, by the way, Corrigan, you used to work on the coast, didn't you?"

"Yep."

"Well, I just received a letter from a friend out West with some pipe-dream about an organization of 'Vampas' or something of the sort. Did you ever hear of such a thing, or has some one been stringing him?"

Corrigan's heavy face lighted with interest.

"You bet I did! That's why I left. I didn't want to increase the undertaking business. If you like that friend of yours I would advise him to forget all he knows about the Vampas as soon as he can put it out of his bean. Why, these here Black Hands and things ain't in it with them. From somewhere or other they have plenty of money, and they have an organization that's a bird.

"The time I run into them I was looking into some dynamiting game down in New Mexico and I got a clue that took me up to Frisco. I came to one morning with four knife wounds in my ribs and the evidence which I had carried in my pocket gone. The trouble is you can't get any real dope on the organization, and any individuals that are caught swear that there is no such thing as the Vampas. After they most got me for the third time I quit."

"Do you suppose that they have any connections here in New York?"

"Never ran into any; but it's highly possible."

"Read this, will you?" said Carrington, handing him Derby's letter. "Begin here at the middle of the page."

Corrigan read slowly. When he came to the description of Mr. Gale he sniffed scornfully.

"That's a great description all right. It doesn't give the color of his eyes, shape of his nose, or any peculiar feature by which you could tell a man. People always hand you the worst lemons anyhow when they try to describe how a man looks. I've never yet seen a man who looked the way any one told me he did. As for this, it might be the description of every third man in New York."

The detective finished the letter and handed it back to Carrington.

"I guess we can't do much on that," he observed. "However, I will take a look round in the morning at the hotels where those Western chaps usually stay. I'll look over the records and see if we have any disappearances that correspond; but there ain't much use, as I guess you know."

"Well, take a try at it anyhow!" urged Carrington. "Derby is a good friend of mine. Good night!"

After parting from the detective, Carrington hurried to the elevator, and was soon fighting his way into a subway express. As he tried to find elbow-room enough to open his paper he once more found himself envying Gerard Derby with his life in the open country.

"He may think he is working," he meditated, "but as a matter of fact he is probably having the time of his life out in a great country with a pretty girl who

probably thinks him a little tin god on wheels."

Carrington strode into the club and made his way up to a group of men who were sprawling on the great leather settee in a corner of the lounging-room.

In answer to the inevitable "What will you have?" he uttered the monosyllabic word: "Bronx!"

One of the men stretched himself sleepily.

"Is it cocktail time already? I didn't think it was so late as that."

"How do you happen to be here, Doc?" questioned Carrington of the speaker. "Is this your day off at the hospital?"

Dr. Talmadge grunted.

"You fellows don't know what work is. When you get through with your business for the day you are finished. Now every time I go out I feel that some poor cuss may be croaking down at Bellevue because I am not there."

"Oh, cheer up, Talmadge! It is more likely that they may pull through if you stay away long enough," drawled Weber pleasantly. "I am sick, though, of all this talk of how every one is working. Every fellow that comes in here seems to think that he is the only man in the world who does any real work. It averages about the same for every one, even for the loafers. Take Gerry Derby, for instance. He probably has to work just as hard to keep himself amused as we do to earn a living."

"Gerry says that he is doing some real work," interposed Carrington. "I just had a letter from him. He is out West, and says he is leading the sort of life that you read about—red blood, virility, and that sort of rot. As a matter of fact, he is probably sitting in the sun on some Mexican ranch, playing the guitar to a fair *señorita*. He wants me to look up for him some chap named Gale, who, he says, is loose somewhere here in New York. Here is his letter. Do any of you care to see it? Nothing confidential."

The men, who were all friends of Derby, glanced through the letter with interest. The mention of the Vampas was the signal for a round of drinks.

"Gerry must have been soused when he wrote that," exclaimed some one, "or else he has a great imagination."

"What a ghastly place to be dumped in!" commented Weber.

"Think of having to write I. O. U. at the top of your letter-paper," commented Carrington.

To the laughing crowd in the club the thought of Gerard's being in real peril did not seem possible. So great is the power of environment that it is almost impossible for people surrounded by luxury and civilization to visualize the great surging, barbarous life on the frontiers.

"What is that about I. O. U.?" asked Dr. Talmadge.

"It is the name of the mine in which Gerry says he is working," Carrington answered.

"It is odd," responded the doctor, "that he should use that name. There is an old chap down in the psychopathic ward at Bellevue who was brought in about three months ago. He was picked up in the street somewhere, and has completely lost his memory. Every time we try to find out who he is, he shakes his head and just keeps repeating: 'I. O. U. —I. O. U.'"

"Three months ago, you say?" asked Carrington sharply.

"Just about that, I should think."

"What does he look like?"

"Well, he is a man about forty-five or fifty, I should guess. He wears glasses with big rubber rims. Medium weight and height. He has a beard now. We call him 'General Grant.' He was clean-shaven when they brought him in."

"Look at this letter!" cried Carrington, excitedly handing it over to Talmadge. "Doesn't that description fit? When can I see the man? Of course it is a long chance—but still—"

"I am going down to the hospital now," responded Talmadge. "Come along if you want to. I do not suppose there is much chance that he is the fellow; but

he may be. Wouldn't it be a coincidence if he were found through the accident of Carrington's reading Derby's letter and his reference to the I. O. U.?"

While Talmadge was speaking he and Carrington slipped into their coats.

"Dick pretends that he is obliged to go down to Bellevue because it is his turn to buy the drinks," commented some one cheerfully.

Carrington dropped back on the settee resignedly, and reaching out for the bell twirled it till the boy came.

Gregory the irrepressible, amid shouts of laughter from the others, solemnly ordered the boy to bring seven Vampas cocktails. The boy went on his way, to return gravely in a minute with the query:

"Bartender wants to know how to make them."

"Oh, don't be an ass, Gregory!" interposed Carrington. "I am in a hurry. Really I am. Come on, Talmadge!"

"Oh, all right, crime doctor!"

As soon as Carrington had signed the check he and Talmadge again rose, and bidding their companions cheerfully to beware of the demon Rum, set forth for the hospital down by the river.

When they had left, the others amused themselves with humorous conjectures as to the result of the quest.

"Carrington is the worst man to jump at conclusions. I don't see how he holds his job down," observed Gregory. "Still, it would be a joke on us if General Grant really turned out to be the man for whom he is looking. Just Derby's luck, too! Trumps always seem to turn up to suit his hand."

CHAPTER XII.

AT THE MERCY OF THE MERCILESS.

ON the same day on which his letter reached his friends in New York, having finished what development work he could do on the claims, Derby took the horses down to the brook to water them. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon, and the intense heat was just breaking. He buried his head gratefully in the cool water of the stream and opened the neck of his flannel shirt wide, then started back to the corral.

As he crossed the Esperanza trail he met a party of four Mexican *vaqueros* headed toward Esperanza, leading with them an extra saddled horse.

Derby greeted them with a careless "*Buenos dies, amigos!*" and was preparing to ride on when one of the men spurred his horse close to him and, after returning his salutation, questioned him as to the distance to Esperanza. The other horsemen also crowded about him.

His interlocutor was apparently unable to understand Gerard's instructions.

"Perhaps the *señor* will show us part of the way?"

Gerard looked at the stranger suspiciously. He knew that men born to the range would not be likely to ask such a question. He whirled his horse suddenly and, ducking low upon its neck, in a flash broke loose from the men who surrounded him.

Right at his heels he heard the thunder of hoofs and knew that his suspicions had been justified. Glancing back over his shoulder and seeing that he was gaining he exulted fiercely in the speed of his mount.

Then without warning he heard a swish through the air, and for a brief moment was conscious of the spinning circle of rope above him, before the noose of the lariat tightened about his neck, and he was flung violently to the ground. Fortunately for him he had not bothered to saddle his horse, as he was only taking him to water. Otherwise the jerk of dragging him from the saddle would have broken his neck.

As it was, he lay half stunned by the fall, and his captors were on him in a trice. One stuffed his mouth with a handkerchief filled with dirt, while another bound his arms behind him with the lariat.

They lifted him onto the spare horse,

tying his feet into the stirrup leathers; then, one of the men taking the bridle in his hands, they set off at a gallop down the trail. They had gagged him so tightly that he could hardly manage to breathe.

Derby glared at his captors helplessly, striving to reach some clue to their identity, but realizing that he had never seen any of the men before. On and on they led him through the rough chaparral, where, being unable to protect himself with his arms, the mesquite thorns lacerated and tore his face. Up gulch and dry river-bed, over hill and through cañon his captors galloped with him at a pace impossible to men not reared and trained in the saddle.

At sundown the *vaqueros* reined in their lathered horses, and lifting Derby down, they tied him to a scraggly pine which grew out of the side of the hill at a sharp angle.

As an extra precaution against his escape, they removed his boots, for no man could cross the sharp, thorn-covered rocks without protection for his feet.

Then they withdrew a few yards, and, building a small fire, started to prepare supper for themselves. They spoke in low voices, and though Derby strained his ears, he could not understand their conversation.

The men's swarthy faces looked even more sinister in the light of the fire than they had appeared in the glare of day. The whole scene was theatrical and unreal, with the shadows of the ranchmen gliding in front of the fire, the distant yowl of a coyote, and the tip of the moon rising in clear silver above the black crest of the mountains.

For an hour Derby stood lashed to the tree-trunk, until it seemed as if he must collapse from lack of circulation and from the strangling of the gag; but still he received no attention from the Mexicans or any sign that they thought of him. He strained his eyes staring into the darkness, striving to make some guess as to his whereabouts, but the place in which he was trapped was typical of hundreds of square miles of the southern bad lands.

Suddenly, outlined in the moonlight, he saw upon the last ridge across which his captors had carried him the figure of a horseman. The image loomed for an instant, then disappeared into the hollow. Another and another horseman followed until he had counted twenty in all.

The Mexicans by the fire rose and moved toward the newcomers. In a few minutes the horsemen rode into the light of the fire and dismounted, throwing their bridles over the heads of their mounts and leaving them to wander free in the manner of the trained cow-pony.

As the men passed before the fire Derby noticed that they were masked. They seated themselves in a large circle, still maintaining silence.

Then two of the Mexicans who had captured Derby suddenly came over and unfastened him from the tree. Then they dragged him into the center of the circle, prodding him with their spurs when, hampered by his ropes, he swayed upon his feet.

They stood him close to the fire where the light shone in his face, and, quickly driving two picket-pins into the ground, fastened his feet to them.

"*Adios!*" laughed one of the Mexicans mockingly. Then he and the other three of the original band withdrew to the outside of the circle.

Derby saw money passed to them by one of the newcomers, then watched them mount and ride away through the murk toward the Mexican line and oblivion.

The circle of men about him drew closer until the more distant were not more than ten feet away. Through their masks their sinister eyes reflected the firelight as if they had been beasts of prey.

Gerard held his head high and met their glances firmly. His cheeks burned from his nearness to the fire and he suffered intensely from his bonds; but he did not flinch.

Suddenly the deep voice of Symmonds

rang out from the circle. "Remove the gag from the prisoner!"

Two men sprang forward and took the handkerchief from his mouth. Gerard panted, drawing in deep breaths and spitting to relieve his tortured mouth.

The man whom from his voice Derby had recognized as Symmonds seated himself a little apart from the others. He raised his arm and pointed it threateningly at Derby.

"Brother Vampas," he said in a deep, echoing voice, "this man had been in the Esperanza, spying upon us. He escaped, through no fault of mine. This same man tried to take my life. He attacked me from behind, a week ago, and almost strangled me. I ask that the sentence of death be passed upon him."

An answering voice spoke up from the darkness:

"Now, look here, West, we can't afford to kill no one now that we don't have to. After that last hold-up coming so close on the one at Independence, we just got to lie low. Why not take him down to the mine and keep him there? This means swinging if it goes wrong."

"Ludlow," growled Symmonds, "we've all done enough for swinging now. But I tell you this man is a spy. What was he doing in the Esperanza?"

Derby looked about him from mask to mask. The black cloths over the men's faces were well suited to executioners.

Symmonds continued: "I have just finished looking through the mail taken from the stage on Tuesday by our men at Regal. Listen!"

He produced from his pocket a letter, which Derby in horror recognized to be in his own handwriting. It was the one he had written to the Secret Service. Symmonds proceeded to read it aloud with malignant emphasis. Then he folded it and looked gloweringly around the circle.

"He has guessed," announced the chief of the Vampas, "where the stuff from the hold-ups is stored. He has guessed more than any man should know of us and live. He must die!"

"Kill him, damn him, then!" came a roar of voices. Nineteen guns flashed from their holsters and were leveled at Derby.

Symmonds strode forward and raised his hand.

"Shooting is too good for this cur! Let me decide his death, and it shall be one worthy of the Vampas."

He beckoned the men aside, and Gerard watched him whisper to them as they stood grouped in a knot, heads close together. A voice rose above the others so high that it carried to Derby's ears.

"West, you sure are a fiend; you've thought of the worst death I ever heard of. Come on, boys!"

The men returned to the fire and grouped themselves about Derby. Shoulder touching shoulder, they formed a solid wall around him. In the center opposite Gerard stood Symmonds.

"Gerard Derby," he said, "you have been tried by the Vampas and our sentence is that you die. No man has threatened our brotherhood and survived. You shall not die with the joy of sudden death, but shall let your life flow forth slowly, cursing the mother that bore you, the nerves of your body that twitch with terror, and the day that you crossed the path of West Symmonds and of the brotherhood of the Vampas."

Derby faced him scornfully.

"You have got me this time, Symmonds," he said quietly, "but sooner or later you will pay. At the moment of my death I shall amuse myself by thinking how, if you escape punishment in this life, you will broil in hell for ages! And now let me tell you one thing: you and your whole crew of Vampas are a lot of damned cowards! Not one of you has dared to face me alone! It has taken twenty. That is odds that only cowards demand."

With a snarl of rage, Symmonds drew back his fist and sent it crashing against Derby's mouth.

"Gag him!" he shouted.

As the men stuffed the handkerchief

into Derby's mouth, Symmonds knelt beside him and whispered something into his ear. Gerard, who until then had been calm, seemed to turn into a madman. He strained and tore at the ropes that bound him, for a moment throwing aside the two men that held him down.

Symmonds laughed hoarsely. "Nancy will enjoy the account of your death, and she will enjoy having *me* tell her all about it.

"Hustle up, men!" he shouted. "Throw him on a horse! We have twenty miles to cover and we must hurry."

Again Derby was placed in a saddle. A stunning blow from a pistol-butt assisted in quieting his struggles. His feet as before were tied into the stirrup leathers with rawhide thongs, and with a man leading his mount, he was placed in the middle of the column that rode southward in column of twos.

One of the men in the rear started the lugubrious verses of "Sam Hall" and the others joined in with harsh, tuneless voices. On and on jogged the column at a steady, distance punishing trot.

Derby's mind pondered upon some possible chance for escape. In the dark there was a possibility that if he could once break into the chaparral he might stand a chance of eluding the conspirators. No matter what the risk, he realized that it would be better than quietly awaiting certain death.

Like a cat he watched every movement of the man who was leading his horse. The others were strung out over a distance of two hundred yards on account of the roughness of the trail, which was barely wide enough to permit two to ride abreast.

Suddenly the horse next him slipped on a slab of limestone and almost fell. The rider was thrown forward in the saddle and for a moment relaxed his grip on the bridle of the horse that Derby was riding. Seizing the opportunity, Gerard drove his heels deep against his mount's side, and the pony bounded forward.

It was a chance in a thousand at best. Bound hand and foot, Derby could only guide the pony with his knees. It was a bad trail by daylight; to gallop over it at night was to court almost certain destruction, yet it was his one chance, and he knew it.

Behind him he heard wild shouts, and the crashing of hoofs upon the rocks, then a mad curse as some horse and rider went down. For a moment escape seemed almost real.

Then a shot barked out. The bullet scarred his cheek, the report echoing back from the rocks. Following the shot came others, the bullets smashing themselves upon the rocky slabs about Gerard and to carom, whining, into the air.

It could not last. The sixth shot went true. Derby felt his horse gather himself beneath him as if for one tremendous leap and then bound forward. For three strides the pony kept the pace, then staggered and fell headlong.

Wild with rage, the Vampas fell upon Derby, kicking his prostrate form.

"It's only half-mile more," hissed Symmonds. "Drag him!"

Two of the men uncoiled their lariats and fastened them about Gerard's armpits, then remounted and spurred their horses forward, till the ropes pulled taut and his body dragged behind them.

Using every muscle in his neck, he managed to keep his head raised a few inches from the ground. For a minute he stood the strain, then human will-power could endure no more, and he fainted.

The motion suddenly ceased. Into Gerard's quarter consciousness came the sound of far-away voices, among which he caught West Symmond's malignant tones:

"Drop him carefully! We don't want to break any bones."

"Leave the snakes to attend to him!" some one else cut in.

Derby felt something lift and sway him back and forth as if he were in a bunk at sea. Then he had the sensation of dropping through space as in a dream.

(To Be Continued.)

And She Took Me In

by Maud Springer Nesom

I.

IT was Sunday night, and Joe Kenagy was sitting up with his girl.

He had come out of the dusk and snow to find her waiting for him in her wine-colored silk, with the base burner in the parlor glowing red-hot behind its mica windows and a warm supper of strictly home manufacture on the dining-room table. There were fried chicken, home-made bread, unstamped butter, gravy, mashed potatoes, cake and jelly, with half-and-half to top off on.

It was a hearty, filling meal, just the supper for a hungry man, and as Joe ate it, Amelia hovering near, he thought over and over how fine it would be to marry a girl who could cook like that. The girl smiled demurely at his bluff, awkward compliments and after he had finished she took the dishes away out of sight to the kitchen, and was busy there for some time while there floated out to him the homely clatter of "redding up."

That finished, she came back to the parlor and the two settled themselves for the evening's courting.

"Where's the folks?" Joe asked suddenly, and Amelia blushed to her finger-nails.

"They had to go down to Cordy's," she explained. "She's sick," she added, all the time deeper tinges of red dying her lovely face and her head sinking lower and lower to the bosom of her wine-colored silk dress.

"Well, that's fine," the young man shouted gleefully, drawing his rocker one hitch closer to the chair of Amelia. "There won't be anybody to bother us, then," he added with extreme satisfaction.

Not that anybody ever did bother Joe and Amelia. It was an understood thing with Amelia's parents and they were glad to give her young man all the leeway he wanted in the courting of their daughter. Joe had a farm, and was steady.

The night wore on. Amelia was shy, but Joe liked the shy kind.

He compared his companion favorably with a certain girl he had seen that very afternoon on his way to his sweetheart's home. This other girl seemed bold to Joe; she had a fashion of looking him straight in the eye and talking to him

like an equal. Joe was a good friend of the young lady's brother, and the girl had talked with as much freedom to Joe as she had to her brother.

Her name was Mary, a good-enough name. And she was a bright, nice girl, but she never dropped her eyes in that alluring way Amelia had, and there was never any shyness about her.

If you could have looked in upon Joe and Amelia about midnight of the same evening you would not have thought the young lady any too shy. She was sitting bodily in Joe's arms by that time, while that tender young man was rocking gently back and forth in the big rocker, his sweetheart's little hands cuddled warmly just inside the lapel of his coat.

It had taken the young man just three solid hours to get her there. There was always that business of coaxing and final shy surrender whenever he came to see Amelia, but Joe loved her all the more for the desperate pleading she got out of him before she at length yielded her sweet young body to his arms for a brief, if very blissful half hour or so before parting.

And now there she was on his bosom with the big house silent and warm, and the two lovers far, far away from the world.

Joe rocked gently back and forth, Amelia sighed into his coat, the anthracite coal fell at intervals with soft rumbles of comfort, and out beyond, where the barn was, one could hear roosters crowing sleepily their midnight vigil.

The parlor was *so* comfortable and the flush on Amelia's cheek almost matched the wine of her dress, where it spread in a shimmering cascade over Joe's knees. Sometimes the young man would reach his free hand over and draw his sweetheart's mouth up for a kiss. Then the girl would cuddle just a shade closer to her lover and he would resume his rocking. Bliss reigned.

But something was bothering Joe. He had come to Amelia through wind and snow, and the time was drawing near when he must leave her, with ten long miles to drive. He could tell by the risen wind that the storm had increased in the night and once when Amelia had gone to the kitchen he walked to the window to discover that drifts had heaped themselves against the house waist high. He must travel home in the face of that storm.

One by one the lights went out in the parlors of the houses scattered up and down the valley, until only Amelia's light remained. One by one cutters and buggies hurried away from farm-houses, with drivers swathed to their chins in robes and buffalo overcoats, until only Joe remained. And still he lingered.

Something was worrying Amelia, too. On her various excursions to the kitchen she surreptitiously telephoned to her mother again and again to see how things were progressing with the sick sister.

The last time was at midnight.

"She ain't gettin' along very well," came the voice of Amelia's mother over the singing wires. "The doctor says the baby won't get here until some time to-morrow morning and all we can do is to wait. Pa and me won't be home till some time to-morrow afternoon, it looks like."

"But, ma," protested Amelia softly into the transmitter, "Joe's here."

"Well, I can't help that," came the response. "Send him home and go to bed. I can't come, so that's all there is to it."

Amelia returned to the parlor with a sick heart and allowed herself to be drawn into her lover's arms for a last embrace. The custom of the valley permitted beaux to stay with their sweethearts until midnight, but beyond that one courted scandal, so Joe said good night and prepared to depart.

The girl clung to him desperately, almost sobbing.

"I hate to have you go out in this awful storm," she said wretchedly. "It's snowing something terrible."

"Aw, I don't care anything about

that," Joe lied briskly. "I've had such a good time that it's worth it. Besides, it won't be very long before I won't have to go off and leave like this. Then we won't care how hard it storms, will we, dear?"

But Amelia broke into sudden weeping, and Joe had to stop and kiss her several times, so that it was one o'clock by the time his buggy creaked through the snow of the yard and made its exit to the drifted highway.

Amelia watched at the parlor window until the carriage had vanished into the night and the storm. Then she shook down the base burner and poured more coal in its top, let out the sleepy cat, and, lamp in hand, mounted the stairs to gaze, weeping, at the three beds that stood cold and spotless in the upper chambers.

She undressed quickly amidst cold tears and crawled between the warm blankets.

"I wish I'd 'a' made him stay," she moaned to herself. "I wish I'd 'a' made him stay."

"But if he had," she resumed with chilly sobs, "with me all alone in the house, it would 'a' been all over the neighborhood to-morrow and I'd 'a' got talked about."

She got up to gaze out at the wind and snow. She crept into the two other rooms and smoothed the pillows, all the time with her thoughts on a young man battling his way against the elements.

"If I had it to do over again—" she said at length with sudden boldness.

But Amelia was a born coward. Poor Amelia!

II.

By the end of fifteen minutes Joe Kenagy was colder than he had ever been in his whole life; at the end of half an hour he began to peer through the shifting snow-clouds for a haven.

He knew that he was not far from the home of Mary, the girl whom he had compared so unfavorably with Amelia, and after jerking vainly at his floundering ponies and beating his hands against the sides of the buggy for another half hour he breathed a frosty sigh of thanksgiving to see a light shine out directly in his path.

A moment later he drove up to a farmhouse door and called lustily for some one to come.

Some one came, some one in a lavender wrapper, a shawl wrapped tight around her shoulders and her hair shining under the light of the lamp that streamed from the door behind her.

"Is that you, Brother Jim?" she called cheerily. Then a moment later—"Oh, it's Joe; Joe Kenagy. Well, what's up?"

Joe was too miserable to speak. He merely clambered out of the buggy, and pulling the lines across the backs of the shivering horses stumbled up the little step on which the girl stood.

"Nothing's up," he said at last, swaying toward her and the kitchen door. "If you'll just let me warm my hands a minute—"

It was the work of an instant for the girl to whisk the lines from the young man's stiffened fingers and push him bodily inside the door, which she slammed shut. Joe could hear her outside, as she climbed into the buggy and applied the lash to the dancing ponies and drove them furiously away.

Presently he heard her returning, her shoes crunching through the snow, then her boyish stamp on the step. She came breezing in like a spirit of the storm outside.

"I got 'em into the barn, buggy and all," she cried. "They're safe. Now what about you?"

There appeared to be plenty "about him." He sat where she had flung him, his face distorted and blanched, his hands held out before him numbly like two sticks.

"They wouldn't 'ave got so cold if I'd 'a' thought to put on my fur gloves," he explained miserably. "But I thought

these'd do. It wasn't stormin' when I left home."

The girl gave a merry glance toward the trim kid gloves that encased the young man's hands, but in an instant the merry look fled and another came in its place, a look of commiseration such as a warm-hearted child might give to a gutter-drenched kitten.

Suddenly she was on her knees before him, pulling off the fastidious gloves and crying out in sympathy as the waxen flesh came to view.

She brought coal-oil and rammed his stiff hands into it and held them there, in spite of the pain that warped his face as the blood slowly made its way back into the smitten members.

"Oh, could anybody let anybody go out on such a night as this?" She stopped short and busily applied herself to the injured hands.

"They're not frozen," she announced at last, when the patient was lying full length on a sofa drawn up to the fire. "But they would have been. It's lucky you stopped. I'd hate to think of you, Joe, above all people, without any hands."

She turned away shuddering, and Joe, crushed and broken and bruised and wilted, was surprised to catch the glint of a tear in her humorous eye and a trace of the same tear in her sympathetic voice.

So she bandaged up the broken hero. She fed him something warm and with her own hands took off his shoes and made him comfortable on the sofa.

"I don't think you'd better try to go up-stairs to bed," she said finally. "It's too cold up there and you'd get all chilled again. You lie right here and I'll sleep in Brother Jim's room, so I can hear you if you want anything. I'll leave the door open, and don't be afraid to call if you need me. Jim telephoned that he wouldn't be home, so you'll have to call me if you do need anything. I'm the only person here."

"Where's Jim?" asked the young man.

"He went to see his girl, and she wouldn't let him come home, not on such a night as this. Keep on wiggling your hands until you get sleepy. Good night."

Joe lay for a long time watching the anthracite coal glimmer behind its mica windows, so much like those of the other base burner down the road. He was floating in a sea of peace and physical well-being. He had been sorely hurt, but one had drawn the sting and brought him solace and comfort.

He thought of Amelia, and how shy she was, and how beautiful. And then he thought of the other girl he could hear moving softly about the bedroom at the end of the hall. A great wave of gratitude swept over him, that buried Amelia and her shyness and beauty quite out of sight.

III.

They both slept. The glare of the coal died to a warm glow, fringed with pale ashes. The room grew darker and darker, and just when the light from the base burner had faded quite away another light, grayish in tinge and stealthy as a thief, stole in.

But it did not disturb the sleeping young man under his blankets on the sofa behind the stove. Once in a while he would stir and half-open his eyes, then turn over for another long snooze. When he did finally get his sleep out the wintry sun was sending long shafts of golden light across the parlor carpet from beneath the drawn shades and far off where he knew the kitchen ought to be he could hear a girl's voice singing happily.

Otherwise the earth was still; the storm had passed away on the wings of the morning.

And that is about all there is to it. Excepting that Joe had to stop the next Sunday and show Mary how his hands were getting along. He did that the next Sunday, and the next, and the next, and the next. And each time he stayed so long that it was too late to go on and see Amelia.

Poor Amelia!

The Motive

by Lawrence Perry

Author of "31754," "Where All Clues Led," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS ALREADY PRINTED.

HAROLD FINCH, partner in the young real estate firm of Finch & Preston, makes the acquaintance of Cecil Hamilton at Narragansett Pier. Being in search of a wife with money, he follows her to Southampton, where Preston also turns up and makes a favorable impression on the girl, much to Finch's chagrin, who finally persuades him to quit the field. Learning that there is some mystery in Miss Hamilton's life, and determined to find out its nature, Finch even goes to the length of invading her room, where he learns that if she marries anybody but Swandorf, a man of sixty and one of her guardians, she forfeits her fortune. By chance Finch & Preston have business dealings with Swandorf, and, in a motor-car, follow him to his place in Larchmont. But he seems not to be about the bungalow where he sleeps, and with Miss Hamilton they all go down there in the morning to investigate. Finally there is only one place left to look—his study—and in trepidation the butler opens the door.

CHAPTER XIV.

INVESTIGATION.

"WELL," Preston stepped forward, pushing the butler aside, "we might as well go in and have this over with."

He stepped across the threshold, and then, after a glance, turned to the others who were advancing to the sill.

"This is a case for the police all right," he said.

The study was absolutely topsyturvy. The desk had been overturned, together with the kerosene lamp which had stood upon it. The floor was littered with papers and the fragments of a chair lay upon the carpet.

In the back a window overlooking the water was bereft of its glass.

Near the desk was a small pool of blood. The girl discovered this.

She was the victim of mingled emotions. There was no doubt that serious assault had been committed and that her guardian probably had been murdered. She was fond of him, and he had always been very kind and considerate to her, but what vistas of future happiness his death opened up!

In the mean time the men were peering about the room. With a cry Preston

This story began in the October Argosy.

pounced upon the envelope which Finch had sent to Swandorf the preceding afternoon. Running over the various documents he found the package to be intact —except that the letter for the recovery of which the two young men had left their office was missing.

Finch's mind was upon other thoughts, and he took the packet from the other mechanically. Perston shook him by the shoulder.

"Do you understand, Hal," he cried impatiently, "that letter you wanted is missing?"

"The letter *we* wanted, you mean," replied Finch composedly. "Yes, I see that it is. And yet, that means little or nothing. Mr. Swandorf may have placed it in his pocket. Or he may have mailed it to his lawyers."

"Yes, of course."

Preston ruefully stooped to pick up a litter of papers, then his eye caught a phonograph, with the receiving funnel lying upon the floor.

He glanced at the disk which was still in its place and found it to be but half covered with the delicate tracings of the needle.

"That," said Cecil Hamilton, following his gaze, "is the dictaphone which Mr. Swandorf used for his correspondence. It is a very delicate instrument, and was made in Germany, I think."

Preston glanced at the disk, took it from the holder, and then changing his mind, set the machine for action and started it. Swandorf's voice sounded clearly:

"Re report of Stanley J. Perkins in the matter of the proposed sale of the Aluminum Products Company I wish to say that—"

It was Cecil who moved to the instrument and shut it off.

"Forgive me, Mr. Preston, but the sound of that voice is so natural that I almost want to shriek. Can't we do without the melodramatics?"

Preston flushed and stepped away.

"Oh, of course," he said, "I was just wondering whether he had been dictating. But let's go on with this thing. What's that, Sammis— What's the matter with you?"

All eyes turned toward the butler who had been leaning out of the window and was now in the middle of the floor, his face contorted, his eyes staring.

"Out there!" he muttered, pointing toward the window. "Look down there."

Preston stepped to the window and there, lying in about a foot of water, lay the body of Benjamin Swandorf. The coat had caught upon a hook projecting from the sea wall and this alone had prevented the remains from being washed away on the night's high tide.

Sammis was ordered to watch it, and while Preston led Miss Hamilton to a lounge, Finch hurried to a telephone.

"We must have the police here," he said.

In response to his summons the chief answered. Harold informed him that a case requiring his immediate presence awaited him at the Swandorf bungalow and then hung up.

"I have summoned the police," he announced on his return, "and I think, Jack, you had better take Miss Hamilton over to the house. She can do nothing here."

He fastened her with his eloquent eyes, smiling in gentle sympathy. "Cecil, I want you to know that I shall stay and attend to everything," he told her. "Don't worry at all. Preston will sit around with you."

Preston, who was inclined to choke Finch for his impudent assumption of authority and his suggestion that he, Preston, would be more at home in the rôle of an inactive comforter, was forced to nod acquiescence because Cecil was clinging to his arm. And her manner left no doubt in his mind that she needed attention.

"I shall not go to the house," she told him. "If you'll take me to the front veranda where I can get the air, Mr. Preston, I shall be all right."

She smiled wanly.

Finch's first move on his return to the study was to go to the phonograph. He had in mind that the disk containing the incomplete dictation of Swandorf's might be of value; but it was not in its place.

He looked on the small stand by the side of the machine and then upon the floor. Here lay a disk, which had evidently fallen and been stepped on, for it was in many pieces. After studying it for a few moments he ground the fragments under his heel as though in angry disappointment and moved to Sammis's side.

"We had better go out and get the body in," he suggested, but the butler shook his head, saying that it was the custom in such matters not to move anything until the police had arrived.

"They like to study over the situation just as it exists, sir," he explained.

The police chief arrived shortly, and as soon as he saw the nature of the case he called up the officials at White Plains requesting that county officers be sent at once. This done he leaped from the seawall into the water and studied all that remained of Benjamin Swandorf.

"It's no case of drowning, I'm certain," he reported. "The man has had his head battered in, probably with that broken chair. Then he was thrown out of the window. I can't say why he was attacked. There was no robbery intended that I can see."

"I don't think so," replied the girl, "for my mesh-bag, with more than a hundred dollars in bills, was found on the floor."

The chief turned to her suddenly.

"You were here last night, then?"

The girl nodded, telling of her dinner and business talk with her guardian.

"I left him about ten o'clock," she added. He said he had a little work to do and was then going to retire."

"Was he without his coat when you left?" asked the policeman.

She shook her head and explained that he had changed his heavier jacket for the light smoking-jacket he wore when he was killed, and had shifted his shoes for heelless slippers at the same time.

"My motor-coat and scarf were on his bed," she added, "and the mesh-bag must have tumbled to the floor without my knowing it when I gathered up my things. Jackson, the chauffeur, came for me in the car."

"I see, Miss Hamilton," said the chief. "Well, all we can do will be to wait for the county folks, who have had more experience with this sort of thing than I have had."

Both Preston and Finch urged the girl to go to the house, pending the arrival of the detectives, and she at last consented, providing they would promise to notify her the minute the men from White Plains arrived.

"They'll have to pass in at the driveway of the main house," replied the chief, "so you can't miss them."

"That's true," Cecil replied, and moved toward Swandorf's motor-car, Jackson having been summoned from the garage by Preston.

When she entered it she found Finch climbing into the rear seat.

Her eyes flashed.

"Mr. Finch, I wish to go to the house alone," she said. "Didn't you hear me refuse Mr. Preston."

"I *did* hear," he smiled, "but, of course Preston and I are a bit different."

She looked into his eyes, glittering darkly like a snake's, and turned away without answering. He slipped into the seat at her side.

"Cecil," he said softly, "you need me. You'll need me more than ever now that you're alone, without a guardian. You may think you won't, but you will. You don't yet realize how Mr. Swandorf stood between you and the world. You will, though. And you are going to value the fact that you can call upon me for—for, well, for all the things that are necessary to be done."

She laughed in rather a hard voice.

"Oh, it will not be quite as bad as all that; not quite, for, as I told you this morning, I was well equipped with guardians through the terms of my father's absurd will."

"Oh, yes," Finch's voice shook. "I remember now you said you had another guardian, or something of the sort. Do you mind if I ask who he is? Oh, merely curiosity, interest in your affairs," he added, raising his shoulders indifferently.

"Why, yes, certainly you may ask," she said. "He is Isaac Silverman."

"Is—! Isaac Silver — Silverman!" Finch bounded up from his seat. "Isaac Silverman! What do you mean? Are you fooling?"

He looked at her suspiciously.

She gazed back at him with unwavering eyes.

"Fooling? Of course not," she replied. "He was my father's first business associate when he came to New York as a young man. It was he that gave him his first chance."

"Why," rejoined Finch, with a snarl in his voice, "he is a good-for-nothing, old skinflint, a money-shark, a reprobate—"

"You apparently know him," she said calmly. "I hope not in his professional capacity."

"No, no." Finch was fairly fuming. "Certainly not. I just know him in his own capacity as an old Third Avenue Shylock."

"He wasn't always that," she said. "He was a very well-known banker years ago. But he became eccentric and took to money-lending. Father always said there was no shrewder judge of financial affairs than he. Mr. Swandorf was associated with him in many investments. He has always been kind to me. But he is not especially fond of young people, and left the handling of my affairs to Uncle Ben. Thirty years ago, you know, they were in a firm together—Silverman, Swandorf and Hamilton."

"I didn't know that."

Finch had sunk back into his seat. With Swandorf dead, he had believed that the way was cleared for the girl's marriage. But now here was Silverman. He could easily see where he would stand in Silverman's eyes.

So far as Finch's present prospects were concerned, Swandorf might just as well be alive.

"Have you notified Mr. Silverman yet?" he asked as the car reached the house.

"Why, no," she said, "and I suppose I should, at once."

Finch offered his services, saying that this was at least something he could do for her. She was quite willing, and nodding her thanks, alighted from the automobile and went up the steps.

Finch followed her into the house and looked about for a telephone. In response to his inquiry a servant indicated one on a table in the hall.

"Isn't there one that is more private?" asked Finch.

The footman pointed to a closet under the stairs which Finch entered and shut the door.

He knew Silverman's number well enough, and in a minute was connected with the old man.

"This," Finch began, "is a *Herald* reporter speaking. Benjamin Swandorf has met his death here at Larchmont—"

Finch caught a harsh aspiration over the wire and construed it as a heavy sigh. He waited a moment until he heard the tense voice saying, "Yes, yes, go on."

"Miss Hamilton, who is ill from shock, requested me to notify you. Of course you'll come up to Larchmont."

Silverman asked Finch to hold the wire, and apparently ran over his plans for the day. At length his reply came.

"I cannot come up until this evening—"

"For dinner?" asked Finch.

"No, after dinner. I haf several imbortant engagements, one auf vich vill keep me until evening."

"At what train shall we meet you?" asked Finch.

Silverman replied that he would come by automobile, that he had made the trip that way several times.

"Then you know the way," Finch went on.

"I do," was the testy reply. "Goot pye. Dell Miss Hamilton I be dere yust as soon as I can this evening."

Finch hung up and sought Miss Hamilton whom he found on the veranda where she reclined in a hammock. He gave her Silverman's message and she thanked him warmly.

"Silverman is a queer old bird," remarked Finch. "I had some business dealings with him once. I think I rather preferred Mr. Swandorf."

She nodded, saying that she certainly did, although Mr. Silverman had always treated her considerately.

"I don't know how he will be now that Uncle Ben is gone," she sighed. "But if all goes well I shall relieve him of his duties of guardian as soon—"

She paused, and the first bright smile Finch had seen since the discovery of Swandorf's death overspread her face.

Finch was about to reply when they heard the purr of a high-powered car coming up the driveway, and in another instant a big touring-car carrying six men stopped in front of the house. One of them, a brisk, keen-eyed young man, leaped to the ground and advanced toward Cecil, who arose to meet him.

"I am the county prosecutor," he said. "You have been having some trouble here, Miss—"

"Miss Hamilton," supplied Cecil. "Yes. I am Mr. Swandorf's ward. He was attacked last night in his bungalow near the water—"

"Oh, not here then?" asked the county officer.

"No," and she shook her head. "If you'll wait just a moment I'll show you where the bungalow is."

On the way to the scene, Cecil had briefly outlined the salient points of the case. When they arrived they found Preston seated on the porch.

"Quigley and Black, you two go and get the body and bring it to the lawn," directed the prosecutor. "Be careful and disturb nothing. Lawson, you come with me and we'll go over the study. Quimby, snoop about the grounds and see if you can find anything, any article, pertinent to the case of any sort."

The party separated, and for an hour affairs hummed about the bungalow.

Finally the prosecutor, whose name was Griffith, took Miss Hamilton aside and held a long conference with her. When she emerged her face was flushed and her eyes shining.

Then the butler was examined, and after him the gardener was summoned from the main house.

In the course of all this Finch and Preston remained seated on the porch. At length Griffith appeared and fastened them with his hawk-eyes.

"I have been given to understand, gentlemen," he said, "that you two were in this house before any one else this morning."

"Sure, that's right," replied Preston.

"Well," Griffith said, "I shall want to have a talk with both of you some time to-day."

"Now?" asked Finch.

"No, not now," was the grim reply. "Perhaps it will not be before to-night. In any event I shall ask you gentlemen to remain within call—that is, do not leave here until I have spoken to you."

He turned abruptly and went into the house.

CHAPTER XV.

SOMETHING ELSE HAPPENS.

IT was late afternoon before Griffith sent for Finch. The scene of operations had been moved to the main house, where the county prosecutor had taken up his quarters in the library. As Finch entered the man leaned back in the heavy oak chair which stood at a big desk table in the middle of the room.

"Now, Mr. Finch," he began, "we have pretty nearly sifted through the gist of affairs associated with this crime, but find several loose ends that have to be connected up before we can say we have got very far."

"I shall be very glad to help you, Mr. Prosecutor," replied Finch, "but I wish to say that I object to the fact that we appear to have been under surveillance all day. Wherever I have gone, or wherever Preston has gone, there we have found some one behind us or in front of us, or near us. Now, I, for one, would like to know what this means?"

"Well, I'll tell you what it means," replied Griffith. "I want to get to the bottom of this case. You are two witnesses after the fact, and as usual with witnesses they do not always see as clearly the importance of various matters as does the man who is saddled with the responsibility for ferreting out things. As a consequence, you might take the whim to run down to the city, putting us under the necessity of awaiting your pleasure before getting your testimony—"

"Testimony!" snapped Finch. "I think you are putting it erroneously. I am not giving testimony—am not in a position where I have to give it."

"I know that," was the the response, "but we might have you arrested as a witness. Of course I don't wish to do that, but I did wish to keep in touch with you, so that when I raised my hand I could have you.

"You will perhaps understand," he went on, "that we work pretty much upon schedule. So, asking your pardon if my men have occasioned you any annoyance—which I instructed them not to do—I'll proceed to question you."

Finch frowned.

"Now, look here, Mr. Griffith, man to man; I'm from New York, and have a pretty definite idea as to my rights in these matters. I am perfectly willing to answer every question you put to me, but I'll be hanged if I answer under duress. If I am to occupy that position, why I'll refuse to answer any of your questions until you have gone through every legal form of arresting me and—"

"I see," whistled Girffith, "you wish to be arrested, wish to put yourself into as much trouble as can be dug up, just because of a fit of irritation."

"No, I don't," ejaculated Finch. "But I don't wish to be dogged about by a lot of flatfoots, as though I were a crook, a suspect—"

"Suppose I should tell you that you were suspected?"

Finch glanced at the man and then grinned. He was game enough.

"In that event," he said, "I should at least know where I stand. If that's the way you feel, call in your men and arrest me, and then some weeks or months later in the police court you may get what facts I know."

Griffith was eying the fellow keenly.

"Well," he said, "I'm not going to arrest you, and after you leave this room you will not be dogged. Now let's go ahead and see where we are. You say you came up to Larchmont in a motor-car. Why?"

Finch explained the business transaction and the mistake that Redmond & Redmond had made in enclosing the letter with the papers.

"Of course," Finch added, "we wanted that letter back before Swandorf could see it—"

"And so," smiled the detective, "you killed him in order to prevent his reading the letter. You see I have technical grounds for making it a little uncomfortable for you if I wished."

"Oh, yes," laughed Finch. "In other words, we killed the goose that we hoped would lay us a golden egg. Pardon me. Mr. Prosecutor, but I'm afraid the case wouldn't hold very much water."

"None the less," persisted Griffith, "I tell you what the fact is; I could make trouble for you. But I'm not going to. So go on and play decently with me."

"That isn't the point, Mr. Griffith; you please play decently with me. I

don't know how Preston feels, but I object to being trailed everywhere I go."

"All right," smiled the prosecutor, "I won't have any reason to keep in touch with you after we have finished this talk, so let us get on. You called up Mr. Swandorf on the telephone as soon as you arrived at Larchmont yesterday afternoon?"

"Yes," Finch nodded. "I called him up and learned that he was to be at his bungalow, and I told whoever it was that talked to me that Preston and I would call in the morning."

"I see. Then what did you do?"

"Why, we put the automobile up, had dinner, and then for a while I stayed with Preston while we watched the dancing at the hotel. I was not feeling very fit, and so I went up to bed about nine o'clock. Preston stayed down; he was going to dance, he said."

"So you went to bed?"

"Yes. In the morning about seven o'clock I went in and wakened Preston. Then we came down here."

"I see." Griffith studied Finch closely. "You've no idea that Preston left the hotel after he went up-stairs?"

"Preston?" Finch stared at the other seriously. "Why, no; I haven't the slightest idea that he did. Of course, if he had I should not have known it, provided he returned in time for me to find him in bed."

"Naturally," Griffith replied, pressing his thin lips together. "Now do you know of any reason why Preston might have seen fit to leave his bed and visit the bungalow last night?"

Finch shook his head. No, he knew of no reason whatever. Of course, he was not familiar with his friend's private life.

"We are business partners, purely and simply," he explained, "and we let it go at that. He doesn't know anything about my affairs outside the office, and I know nothing of his."

"Then you cannot conceive of any motive Preston might have for attacking Swandorf?" persisted the lawyer.

"Preston!" Finch frowned as though in thought. "Why, no. Except — except, since we are talking frankly, Swandorf was Miss Hamilton's guardian, I believe, and I know Preston is very much enamored of the girl, who"—Finch raised his hand deprecatingly—"is an extremely close friend of mine."

"You mean that Swandorf might have had some objections to Preston's friendship for his ward, and that as a result the two quarreled over the matter?"

"Oh, I have no suspicions of any sort," affirmed Finch. "That's a matter for you to determine. I can only tell you the facts. Preston said nothing to me about Swandorf; I can tell you that much."

"I see." Griffith pondered a moment. "Well, I don't want you to say anything to Preston. I mean about my talk with you. But for your own information I'll say I've got hold of certain facts that rather excite my curiosity concerning that young man."

"Is that so?" exclaimed Finch. "I had no idea of such a thing! What are —why are you suspicious?"

"That you may know later. For the present it is as well to let things take their course—that is, until I am surer of my ground. Preston seems a sharp one. If you don't object I'll not give him any reason to think that we're watching him any closer than we are you."

"That's all right," said Finch; "but just the same tell your men to stop dogging me around as they have been doing. I don't like it. Miss Hamilton and I have an understanding, I may say; at least, we are approaching one, and if she comes to realize that I am being trailed like a criminal it may injure me. I certainly have no intention of quitting this house, under the circumstances, and it is foolish of you to think that I have."

Griffith nodded affirmatively.

"You will not be followed from now on," he said. "Go and come as you please and I'll instruct my men to let you alone."

Finch smiled cordially and, reaching

out his hand, grasped that of the prosecutor's.

"All right," he said, "and I want you to know that anything I can do or say that will help, you may count on me for. I'd like to have this thing cleared up as soon as possible."

"It will be cleared up before long," the prosecutor returned quietly. "I really think that before long—"

He leaned forward and whispered confidentially in Finch's ear, while Finch, nodding at every word, gave every sign of interest if not satisfaction.

"I think that is all for the present," concluded Griffith. "Your headquarters are at this house, you say?"

"Yes. Miss Hamilton wishes me to stay on," Finch replied, "and I have told her that after I have run down to the city in my car this afternoon to look over some affairs in the office I'll return." He laughed. "I hope you have no objection."

"None in the least," replied Griffith cordially. "Go ahead, and I'll see you this evening. Meantime send Preston to me."

Finch nodded and left the room.

He found Miss Hamilton on the veranda and Preston with her.

"Preston," he laughed, "I've been through the mill. Griffith called to me as I was coming out that he was ready for you. Go in and tell him all you know."

As Preston arose and went into the house Finch turned to the girl. "Miss Hamilton," he began, "I have talked with Mr. Griffith, and he seems to think that it would be well if I stayed around for a while. I have assisted him in several clues. Do you suppose I might put up in the bungalow?"

Cecil raised her hands.

"By no means, Mr. Finch. I wouldn't have any one I knew sleeping in that dreadful place. I shall instruct Sammis to make up one of the guest-rooms for you. I have already asked Mr. Preston to stay."

"You have!" Finch looked at her in surprise.

"Why, yes," she replied. "Surely there was no good reason why I should not. Can you suggest any?"

"Oh, no," Finch hastened to assure her. "None at all. But you know how I feel toward you, and you also must be aware that one never feels at ease when he knows that a rival is in the house."

"Rival!" She blushed. "You are very frank, Mr. Finch."

"Cecil," and his eyes burned into hers, "from the first minute I saw you I realized that you were made for me. You may not realize it yet. But you will. It is in the books."

She rose angrily and stamped her foot.

"Mr. Finch, if I hear you say anything more of this sort I shall ask that you take up your abode somewhere else."

He smiled easily.

"Is it so outrageous for a man to declare his passion?" he asked.

"It is outrageous when the other person does not wish to hear it," she flashed. "I must ask you, Mr. Finch, to stop it."

"You don't wish to love me?"

"No, I don't—and I won't. So there."

"Oh, yes, you will," he insisted. "You will and you know you will. And our romance will not be cold and matter of fact. It will be the old-fashioned sort, the kind you read about. For I love you with no mild passion, Cecil. I could take you now and carry you to that motor-car and take you away to a desert island." He arose, his eyes gleaming. "And I would, too, if there were a desert island anywhere handy."

She could not resist the sheer physical magnetism of the man, much as she loathed him. A thrill swept over her, and her imagination carried her through the picture of her hanging resistlessly in strong arms and of being carried away willy-nilly—a willing slave in the hands of a master.

But with all the force of her nature she desperately resisted the surging imagery, forcing it out of her mind.

"Unless we talk of something else," she said weakly, "I shall go into the house and stay there. I am not well, and I don't think you are at all fair to me."

Finch was instantly all tenderness. He dashed to her side, felt of her pulse, and insisted upon ordering the butler to bring her a cooling drink. He was very deft and very attentive and she lying back meekly suffered his ministrations.

When she was resting comfortably Finch turned from her.

"I must run down to the city to look after some office affairs," he said. "I shall not be gone long. If you see Preston tell him I shall return this evening."

She, glad enough to be rid of him, nodded and picked up a novel, while Finch descended the steps and began to crank up the gray motor-car. In another moment he was at the wheel and with a wave of his hand disappeared.

In the meanwhile Griffith was questioning Preston in rather a perfunctory way, going over about the same ground as with Finch and getting the same replies until the matter of Finch's telephoning to Swandorf's house upon their arrival in New Rochelle came up.

"Finch phoned," said Preston, "and received word that Swandorf had gone sailing or motoring, or something, and would not be back until morning."

The prosecutor eyed the young man with interest, recalling that this statement hardly jibed with Finch's assertion that he had been informed over the telephone that Swandorf intended spending the night in his bungalow.

"Are you sure," he asked, "that this was the message Finch received?"

"I don't know what message Finch received," Preston replied. "I am only telling you what he *told* me he received."

"I see." Griffith nodded. "Is Mr. Finch accustomed to saying one thing to one person and another to some one else?"

Preston grinned and then started to speak, but suppressed whatever it was he intended to say.

"You have not answered my question," persisted his interlocutor. "Does he say one thing to one person and another to another?"

Preston grinned again.

"Well," he replied simply, "Finch is a real estate man."

They both laughed, but the lawyer seemed to make quite a point of this discrepancy in the stories of the two young men.

"Now," he inquired, "if Finch knew Swandorf was at his bungalow, why did he tell you something else? Have you any reason that might be assigned for this?"

Preston shrugged. No, he had not the slightest idea. He did not seem to think that the discrepancy amounted to much. Whether Swandorf was sailing or motoring or in his bungalow made little difference so far as he could see. At all events he was willing to swear that was what Finch told him.

"Where did you put the car when you went to the hotel last night?" asked Griffith.

The reply was that Finch had attended to its disposition.

"I suppose he put it under the sheds. I'm not sure. Why?"

"Oh, nothing special," the prosecutor said. Then he began a long series of questions concerning the firm of Finch & Preston, especially in so far as it had been concerned in a business way with Swandorf.

"You know of Isaac Silverman?" asked Griffith at length.

Preston said that he did, although he personally had never had business dealings with the man, who was a money-lender.

"How did you know of him then?" Griffith went on.

Preston smiled quizzically, replying that he just happened to know of him and that was all.

Griffith then asked if Finch had borrowed money from Silverman.

"Don't you think that is a question

more properly to be put to Finch?" retorted Preston, whereupon Griffith smiled and said he fancied that it was.

A few other questions followed, and then Griffith arose, smiling pleasantly.

"I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Preston," he said with a final nod. "You know, of course, that I have questioned you at this length in order to obtain every possible detail."

Preston said that he understood perfectly, and the two men moved out to the veranda. Miss Hamilton was just entering the house. Dinner, she said, had been announced, and she asked Griffith to join Preston and herself.

"Mr. Silverman," she said, "will be here some time after dinner, but he may be late."

"Mr. Silverman!" Preston showed his surprise.

"Why, yes," she said, adding that he had been associated with Mr. Swandorf as her guardian.

She then gave him information concerning the relations of the three men, such as she had imparted to Finch. It might be said that no such chagrin was felt by Preston as had been the case with Finch when he heard of Silverman's intimate association with Cecil Hamilton.

Dinner, as might be expected under the circumstances, proved a rather quiet affair. Immediately afterward Griffith went down to the bungalow and had a conference with his detectives and about eight o'clock he returned to the house just as Finch came rolling in.

"So here you are," the prosecutor said cordially. "I trust you have no complaint to make of me."

Finch shook his head. He turned to Preston and gave him some details of the status of affairs at the office and then sat down on the steps, fanning himself with his hat. He had dined, he said, in response to Cecil's questions.

The four sat until nine o'clock enjoying the evening breeze from the Sound, and Griffith was about to telephone the bungalow when a servant came out with information that Miss Hamilton was wanted on the wire.

She was gone about five minutes, when Sammis came out to the veranda on the run.

"Hurry, quickly," he cried breathlessly. "Miss Hamilton—I found her on the floor near the telephone in a dead faint."

The three men rushed to her assistance. Sammis had carried her to a divan in the hall and a maid was applying water to her forehead.

Griffith began chafing her hands, while Preston and Finch followed his directions as to making her more comfortable. Her maid finally brought in some aromatic spirits of ammonia, which proved effective in reviving her.

She opened her eyes, staring at the group uncomprehendingly for a moment. Then color began to return to her cheeks. Griffith regarded her anxiously.

"I don't wish to force you, Miss Hamilton," he said, "and I do not wish you to make any effort. But you must have heard news of interest to me. Can you tell me what it was?"

Her lips parted, but for a moment no sound came. Then with an effort she spoke.

"I—I," she paused, as though gathering strength, and then went on. "I have just received word that Mr. Silverman was killed — under suspicious circumstances while coming here in his automobile."

"Killed!" Griffith started backward. "Killed! How?"

"His car went off a small bridge. He was instantly killed and his chauffeur is in the hospital unconscious."

CHAPTER XVI.

GRIFFITH GROWS CONFIDING.

GRIFFITH, who had obtained from Miss Hamilton the information that the tragedy had happened in the outskirts of New Rochelle, at once leaped for his car.

"I am pretty certain," he said, "if this accident cannot easily be explained that it must be associated one way or another with Mr. Swandorf's death. I don't know how; but I shall know soon."

"I must have come over the same road that Silverman was traveling," said Finch. "I fail to see how anything could have happened short of a collision, or perhaps the breaking of a tooth in the steering mechanism."

"Well, we'll see. Do you want to go?" and Griffith nodded at Finch, who moved to the car with alacrity, saying he would be delighted to be of any assistance he could.

He jumped into the back seat and one of Griffith's men, who had been summoned from the bungalow, climbed in beside him.

"Preston, you stay here with Miss Hamilton," directed Griffith, "and if there are any messages for me take them and say I'll return to the house by midnight."

The car flashed down the driveway and once on the main road no consideration of caution was permitted to stand in the way of making the swiftest possible time. Outside of New Rochelle, Griffith got police headquarters on the telephone and asked the route to the scene of the accident. He was told to keep straight on the main thoroughfare until he came to a white roadhouse, and that there he would find local detectives.

Griffith did this and presently brought his car to a halt in front of the place designated.

Here a plain-clothes man entered the car and directed Griffith to drive along for a quarter of a mile. This he did, stopping his car at a word from the detective. They all alighted and the plain-clothes man pointed to a rude byway, more of a trail than a road, which ran off from the highway and entered the woods.

"This little road," explained the detective, "runs through the woods and joins the main road about a mile and a half farther along. This was the route Silverman's car took."

"Took this!" exclaimed Griffith. "Why did he do that? What was the matter with the main road."

"Nothing's the matter," was the reply, "but I'll show you what was the matter with Silverman's chauffeur." He walked into the bushes and drew forth a long white board upon which was painted "Detour, a mile and half. This road being repaired."

"Detour!" Griffith's voice rose. "Why, there is no reason for a detour. Where are they repairing the road?"

"Nowhere, not in this region at least," said the detective. "I am merely telling you why Silverman's car did not follow the highway."

"You mean to say—" Griffith paused. "Oh, I see: that sign was placed in the middle of the road in order to deflect Silverman."

"Exactly," was the reply. "This wood trail was opened some time ago when the road was torn up here. But it has not been used much since then. The person who put this sign up knew about this road and he knew that this sign was lying behind the hotel there, where the workmen had placed it after the repairs were completed and the road could be used."

"Extraordinary!" Griffith's brow was wrinkled. "Well, let's go on along the wood road and see what's there."

They all returned to the car, which bumped and rolled over the abandoned trail for about a mile.

"Now go carefully," the detective cautioned, "and I'll show you what happened. In fact ahead you can see the lights of some of our men."

Sure enough, in the distance could be seen the twinkling of lanterns and the flash of electric search lamps. The car proceeded slowly until at length they came to a sharp break in the road. Here were the police and here the motor was stopped and the party alighted.

The detective, leading Griffith forward,

showed him the ruins of a small rustic bridge.

"A brook," he explained, "had cut a culvert here, and they had to bridge it with logs. It's a drop of about seven feet. It was a strong enough bridge originally, but I suppose had not stood the passage of time."

"You mean there is no evidence that the bridge had been tampered with?" interjected Griffith.

"Well, not that we can see. The logs may not have been removed; they may simply have fallen apart."

"Then where is the suspicious nature of this—" Griffith stopped short. "Oh, I see, of course," he added. "That detour sign gives it the ugly look."

"Of course," replied the detective.

Finch had gone forward and was examining the bridge with the aid of a sarch lamp he had borrowed. Now he called to the prosecutor.

"This bridge was tampered with without a doubt," he said. "Look here; this wood has not rotted a bit, and the logs were driven well into the earth. You can see here where the supports have been dragged to one side. There's a clear marking all along here—and here," he cried, "lie the very logs that were dragged away."

Griffith, who had followed the light of Finch's lamp, nodded in acquiescence.

"You should be a detective, Finch," he grunted. "You're right; this bridge has certainly been tampered with."

He gazed down into the culvert where the wreck of the big touring car lay. It stood upon its radiator, the rear wheels protruding into the air.

"The chauffeur, you say, is unconscious?" he asked.

"Not now," replied the man who had met them at the road-house. "I received a message just before you arrived saying that he had recovered his senses. But he couldn't tell much. He was driving along, he said, and the first thing he knew he felt the car drop. And that was the last thing he knew."

"I see. We'll have to wait for morning. But, pshaw!" He turned to the police. "There have been so many tramping around here that there will be no possibility of making any footprint measurements. Well, when it is light look around and see what you can find."

He walked toward the motor, asking a detective where the body was, and upon learning it had been taken to the city, he expressed the intention of viewing it.

The detective, Finch, and Griffith entered the car, and as they drove into New Rochelle the county officer questioned the police official as to the location of the body when found. The reply was that it lay ten feet from the bridge, the head against a tree stump.

"He was evidently hurled from the car," vouchsafed the detective. "The chauffeur went down, but got himself clear from the wheel and climbed out. He dropped when he reached the earth."

"Then who discovered that there had been an accident?" asked Griffith.

He was informed that a farmer, who used the road as a short cut, was driving to the city in his truck wagon and was near enough to hear the crash. He drove up, and taking the two men in, went on to the road-house, where he telephoned for assistance.

The body of Silverman lay in the mortuary in the basement of police headquarters. The chief met them in the hall and escorting the party into his office produced such of the old man's belongings as had been found upon his person. Among the possessions was a letter from Cecil Hamilton, dated the previous day from the Swandorf estate.

"That," said the chief, "is why I called up the young woman; of course, I was struck at once by the fact that the two dead men were known to the young lady."

Griffith said that he, too, had been struck by the same coincidence. He read over the letter and examined several other papers, all of a business nature,

which had been taken from the clothing of the dead man. The fact that no jewelry, nor money, nor rings — there were ring marks on the dead man's fingers — had been recovered, seemed to make the motive for the fiendish crime clear by one of robbery.

"He must have been carrying a large sum," mused the chief, "or else he had something of value that some very desperate persons were willing to commit murder to obtain."

"I don't know," replied Griffith. "I can't get it out of my head that in some way the deaths of Swandorf and Silverman are related. There has been nothing to establish the relation at present, but—" he smote his palm with his fist—"no one will make me believe that any one went to all this trouble just for the sake of a roll of bills or jewelry."

"I wonder how his route was known. Did he tell Miss Hamilton how he was coming?"

"No, he didn't" interpolated Finch. "I called him up at Miss Hamilton's request—"

"You called him up!" Griffith turned upon him suddenly. "You—"

"Yes, to notify him of the death of Mr. Swandorf and to tell him Miss Hamilton was bearing up. He said he would leave for Larchmont as soon as he could; he couldn't tell exactly when, as he had several important business engagements."

"He has been in these parts in his car before this, I suppose?" muttered Griffith.

"Oh, I suppose so," Finch said. "In fact, I asked him if he wished me to accompany him here, as I was to be in the city; he said he had no idea when he would be ready to start. That was all I said to him, or he to me." Finch shrugged. "I'm just as glad now I did not come with him."

"I should think so," agreed Griffith. "By the way, you knew Silverman, didn't you?" he added.

Finch did not waste a second in replying.

"You bet I knew him," he exclaimed. "He holds my note for a loan of four thousand dollars."

Griffith stared at the fellow, amazed at his frankness.

"I wanted to make a deal in the Street," Finch continued, "and this old shark was the only one I could get the money from. I plunged on Aluminum Preferred and this morning it went up ten points like a shot. That was one of the reasons I went down to the city; I ordered my brokers to sell and made a neat little clean-up."

As Griffith nodded, he went on:

"I'm just as glad I did, because I should certainly hate to have Miss Hamilton hold a note of mine. That is, I suppose she will get his money and interests."

"I don't know anything about that," said the prosecutor. "There is no especial reason why she should, is there?"

"Not that I know of," shrugged Finch, "except that she is a sort of ward of his. Anyway, I won't wait for the note to mature before I pay it to whomever is entitled to get it."

As a matter of fact the market had played in Finch's favor, and he had a fair sum of money salted away in his rooms in the city, having found his attention not too greatly distracted by the exciting events of the morning to call up his brokers and question them as to the status of Aluminum Preferred. His order for them to sell came promptly upon their information that the stock was kiting upward by leaps and bounds.

The county physician, in the meanwhile, had arrived and Griffith was engaged in a conference with him. They were whispering together, and Finch could see the prosecutor's head nodding in response to the doctor's emphatic gestures. The chief finally moved over to them and joined in the conference, and Finch was beginning to feel somewhat out of the situation when the prosecutor left the group and began walking up and down the room, his head bent in thought. Presently he stopped in front of Finch.

"Dr. Thompson does not believe that Mr. Silverman was killed in that accident. He believes he was murdered after it."

"You don't say so! And how does he figure that out?" asked Finch. "Are there wounds upon the body?"

"Why no, not exactly." Griffith linked his arm carelessly through Finch's. "Come on down and we'll get Thompson to show us."

He moved toward the stairs, calling to the physician and the chief to follow. If Finch did not relish the prospect he said nothing to indicate that fact. In fact, he went down-stairs with every manifestation of interest.

They turned from the hall and entered a door into a cold, damp apartment, the concrete walls dripping with moisture. Here lay the body of the old money-lender. Finch observed it curiously.

"He certainly landed upon his head," was his comment.

"That's just the point, did he?" returned the physician.

He went up to the head, beckoning the others to follow, and pointing to the battered skull said that every sign pointed to the fact that although the body was found with the head against a tree, the man had not really been hurled to that position.

"Look here," he went on, indicating marks upon the face and head. "Those wounds were never made by a tree trunk. They were made with a blunt instrument. In other words this man was not killed by his fall from the car. What probably happened was that he landed on the ground in a dazed condition, or perhaps even fully conscious, and that those who wrecked the car completed with clubs the work they had intended to do. There isn't the slightest doubt in my mind that Silverman died in this way."

"What do you think, Finch?" asked Griffith. "I agree with Dr. Thompson; so does the chief. Do you?"

"Yes, I do." Finch nodded emphatically. "It certainly looks as though he had been beaten to death."

"Then we're all agreed," returned Griffith. "Well, I suppose we may as well go back to the Swandorf place, and wait until morning for any light the detectives here can throw upon matters. I'll ship Quinby and Black down here—because I have an idea that the Swandorf case is so well in hand that we can spare those two men."

"The Swandorf case well in hand!" exclaimed Finch. "Do you mean to say you have a definite idea—"

He paused, regarding the prosecutor curiously.

"Come on out in the car, and I'll tell you what I think on the way back," replied Griffith, leaving the mortuary chamber and ascending the stair. "Our route will take us past the detour that Silverman made, and we'll stop and see if anything has been picked up. I should think the men might find some weapon or other lying around."

As it happened the chief of police got into the car with them and thus on the way to the road-house Griffith was not in a position to carry out his promise to inform Finch as to his ideas concerning the Swandorf case. Finch sat in the rear seat, while Griffith and the chief were in front, conversing in low tones throughout the journey.

Finch leaned forward often in his curiosity to catch what the talk was about, but he never heard more than a disconnected word or two.

When they reached the place where Silverman's car had entered the woods they were met by a detective, who sprang upon the running-board, holding up a thick gold watch.

"We found this in the woods about a hundred feet from the broken bridge," he said. "I guess the highwaymen must have dropped it in their haste."

"Dropped nothing," scoffed Griffith. "This is very important, Murphy, and I'm glad you found it."

"What do you make important out of that?" asked the chief.

"Why," Griffith explained, "this may

be taken to mean that robbery, after all, was not the motive. That watch was thrown away by the criminals, or criminal. He didn't want it."

"Perhaps," volunteered Finch, "it was because he did not wish anything that would incriminate him found upon his person." He shrugged. "Of course, I'm no detective; that is only my idea."

"Well," returned Griffith, "it is, of course, not a bad idea and if we do not pick up some more jewelry or money you may be right. Yet, somehow, I don't think robbery entered into the matter. Swandorf was not robbed and the more I think of it the more I place the two cases together. The man who killed one —or caused one to be killed — had a hand in the death of the other. That is the feeling I have, and I usually rely a whole lot upon my feelings. Chief, you'll stay on the job, won't you? I am going back to Swandorf's house, and if you want me—" He bent over the wheel, and the chief alighted.

Finch, at Griffith's request, transferred himself from the back to the front seat.

"Now," began the chief, "I'll tell you the way this Swandorf thing looks to me. For your private information I may say that I've rather got my mind fixed on that nonchalant young friend of yours, Preston."

Finch, starting forward, gazed into the man's face.

"You say you believe, suspect, that Jack Preston—" His voice choked in agitation.

"I can't tell you anything more now," Griffith went on, "but I don't want Preston to think that he is under surveillance — my men must have been clumsy to let on to you and your friend that you were both being watched—and I shall want your help."

"All right," Finch assented. "But, of course, this is utterly amazing to me. Preston, of course, is a devil-may-care sort of chap, but—what object would he have?"

"As to that I'll tell you more later," interrupted Griffith. "Just at present I want you to assist us in seeing that he does not go anywhere where it would be difficult for us to lay hands upon him."

Finch nodded.

"You can count upon me," he said.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN UNPLEASANT ANNOUNCEMENT.

WHEN Finch and Griffith arrived at the Swandorf place again they found Preston and Miss Hamilton in the library. She lay upon the couch and Preston was reading a novel.

It was nearly eleven o'clock, but she had resisted Preston's solicitous importunities that she retire. She had been very silent; in fact, aside from Preston's urging her to go to her room, and her assertion that she wished to wait until Griffith returned, there had been no conversation.

At length she had put down her magazine and gone to the couch, dozing there while Preston buried himself in one of his favorite old novels he had found in the book-shelves.

As the two men entered the girl arose with flushed face and eager eyes. Her first glance fell upon the prosecutor.

"Well," she said, "I suppose you can tell us all there is to know."

Griffith was inclined to defer the narration until morning, but as she insisted he ran hastily over the various details of Silverman's death, not omitting to state his belief that the man had not been killed as a result of the wrecking of the car. She followed every word with the deepest interest.

"This is a terrible mystery," she cried. "Here Uncle Ben Swandorf, my guardian, is murdered, and less than twenty-four hours afterward the only other man in the world who is near to me is also killed." Her voice quivered. "I feel a spell of evil over the entire household. My two guardians have gone—when will my turn come?"

"Now, now!" Griffith's voice was soothing. "I don't want you to think along such lines. It is silly and will upset you completely. No one wishes to harm you, I'm sure. And we have detectives all about. You will be well guarded —not that it is at all necessary—and well cared for. You have nothing to do but pull yourself together so that you can meet the responsibility thrown upon you like a real woman."

"Oh, never fear as to that," she returned defiantly. "I shall meet anything of that sort in precisely the manner you would prefer, but I cannot help that feeling of dread."

"It is quite natural," Preston put in. "You would not be human if you felt otherwise. I don't blame you; but as Mr. Griffith says, you are well protected. If any danger lurks about we'll nail it."

"We will that?" chimed in Finch. "Now, I, for one, am going to bed."

"Guess we'd all better go," agreed the prosecutor. "But first I shall have to call up my home and tell my wife I won't be back. Good night, all." He stepped out into the hall while Cecil rang for her maid.

When Mimi came the girl arose and, nodding to the two men, passed out. Preston turned to Finch.

"Hal," he said, "let's light a cigarette and mull things over. This certainly has been one stormy day. What do you make out of the whole thing?"

Finch grunted, arose, and walked toward the door. He was in no mood, he said, to mull over anything. He was going to bed.

"But," Preston urged, "before you go. Griffith said you told him that when you called up this house last evening they told you Swandorf was at his bungalow. You told me he was out on a trip. What's the answer?"

"Oh," yawned Finch, "nothing—except that I thought you might insist upon cleaning up the thing and visiting the bungalow right away. I didn't feel like arguing."

"I see," Preston replied. "After this, though, I want you to understand I am not to be treated as a troublesome child."

Finch paused upon the threshold, gazing at Preston, and then without reply turned upon his heel and left the room.

Preston remained in his chair, smoking, and thinking over the events of the day, until finally, sensing the soporific influences for which he had been waiting, he got up and slowly ascended the stairs to his room.

The apartment that had been assigned to him lay in the rear of the house at the right of a central hall. Two doors away was a concrete and tile bathroom. Next to that was an up-stairs reading-room. Most of the bedrooms lay on the left side of the hall.

Preston undressed, and then, feeling in the mood for a bath, he put on a robe which had been placed upon his bed and left his room, purposing to enter the shower, when the sound of a voice, quivering with nervous intensity, came to him.

He listened and then recognized the voice as that of Finch. Then he caught the murmuring of a woman's tones.

Deeply interested, Preston paused until he had located the source of the sound. It came from the study, just beyond the bathroom. Only one light was burning in the hall, and that at the other end.

Hardly realizing what he was doing, Preston stole softly toward the study door. It was closed when he had passed it, but now it was slightly ajar, the effect possibly of a gust of wind. As he arrived at the door the woman's voice came in half pleading, half indignant accents:

"Mr. Finch, I command you to let me go."

Yet there was something in the tones that deterred Preston from rushing in at once to her assistance. Instead he pushed the door gently open and looked in.

At one end of the room was a heavy table, and upon it a lamp with a crimson shade which did not throw a great deal of light. In the middle of the room stood Finch, and Cecil Hamilton was in his

arms. Her head was thrown back, averted, but her arms hung at her side.

"You know you like it," Finch was saying. "Cecil, you know you love me, as I love you, and that you have never felt safer all this evening than in my arms. Come, admit it."

He leaned forward, kissing her upon the cheek. She shivered and, raising her hands, attempted weakly to free herself.

"Cecil, I want you to say you will marry me. You need a strong arm and a clear brain to protect you. Why do you deny me, when every instinct tells me and tells you that you love me. Why, Cecil, I'll get down upon my knees and tell you that I cannot live without you."

She did not reply, but made no further effort to free herself. He drew her closer.

"You need me; you need some one who loves you so well that he will watch and guard you as he would his own life. You know it is not any money you may have that makes me say this. I have money, plenty of it. But that is not the point. There is a murderer in this house who will stop at nothing to win you; give yourself to me and let me protect you."

"I will never believe," she cried, "that Mr. Preston killed my Uncle Ben, and that he also arranged for Mr. Silverman's death. It is absurd!"

Preston, hardly able to contain himself, was on the point of bursting into the room when Finch's words gave him pause.

"You know you have every reason to believe that he is implicated in the murder of Mr. Swandorf, aside from that of Silverman."

"I do not know anything of the sort," she cried, struggling to release herself, this time effectually, since Finch made no great effort to retain her.

"Oh, yes you do," he asserted. "Why have you not told Mr. Griffith that you picked up Preston's cigarette-case in that study at the bungalow?"

"How did you know I picked it up?" she flashed back, eying him tensely.

"I didn't know it," smiled Finch, "but I know it *now*. I had not seen Preston have it in his possession lately, and was wondering what had become of it. Then it came to me that if he had been Swandorf's assailant he might have dropped it in the scuffle. And you see," he added, "that I am right in my conclusions. If Griffith or any of his men had found it Preston would be under arrest already."

She looked at him a moment in silence. Then she smiled.

"Yes," she said, "I found that cigarette-case. I—"

"Oh, I see!" Finch threw back his head and laughed. "I see it all now!"

"See what now?" she asked.

"I see why Griffith spoke so positively concerning his suspicions of Preston. He told me of them while we were driving back from New Rochelle."

"Well," she rejoined, "he didn't have that in mind, as I haven't told him. At all events, a cigarette-case may not mean much."

"Nothing—except that the owner must have been in the bungalow," sneered Finch. "Come, Cecil—to leave Preston in Griffith's hands—don't you think you can love me enough to marry me—soon."

She regarded him a moment.

"I will say this, Mr. Finch: you attract me. I am not sure yet. You must wait. When this dreadful matter is cleared up—But I warn you that if you ever touch me again—until I give you the right, I shall ask Mr. Griffith for protection."

"Until you give me the right!" Finch smiled exultantly. "That is sort of a halfway promise, isn't it?"

"You will have to accept it for what you think it is worth," she responded. "And now I am going to my room." She turned to him, in mid-course. "You won't say anything about the cigarette-case?"

"Of course not. Good night, dearest." As she did not reply he turned to the table and put out the lamp. Preston crouched in the doorway of the adjoining room and let her sweep past him to her own apartment at the head of the hall.

Preston was shivering with excitement,

and with a species of dread. Evidently in the eyes of several persons he occupied the position of a suspected murderer.

It was not a pleasing sensation. It had taken every atom of will-power at his command to stand in that doorway and hear himself calmly discussed as a criminal by Finch. His partner, and supposed friend, seemed to take it quite as a matter of course, seemed rather inclined to beat down Cecil's defense of him.

What would happen now? He had missed his cigarette-case, had searched for it, but in the excitement of the day had neglected to speak of his loss to Finch. And, apparently, it had been picked up in the bungalow.

He tried to recall when he had last had it in his possession, but could remember nothing other than that he had taken it from his pocket the previous evening and placed it upon the bureau in the hotel room just before retiring.

He knew he had not had it in the morning, for he always smoked a cigarette while he dressed, and he had missed it at the time. And how had Finch been so cock-sure in his suspicion that Cecil had found it? There was something wrong somewhere.

He had heard of innocent victims of the inexorable law, of men who had been railroaded for crimes they had never committed. Was he to be another of them?

Preston's teeth clinched. Apparently he would be if Finch had anything to say about it.

And why was Finch so eager to associate him with the murder? He thought a moment and then found the answer.

Finch was a suitor for Miss Hamilton's hand. Finch had reason to know that Preston was deeply interested, if not in love, with her. What more natural than that a man of his vicious tendencies—and Preston had come to regard Finch as a person to be watched and feared since he had discovered the theft of the mortgages—should seek to attach the crime to his partner and thus put him out of the way, temporarily, if not finally?

Well, and Preston's face darkened, he would at least have something to say about that. After what he had heard tonight, he would rest under no illusions concerning Finch's attitude toward him. He would let him know that the work he had begun under cover would hereafter be fought in the open, if he could bring it about. If Griffith regarded him as a suspect in this crime, he pitied Griffith's ignorance; and yet, on the other hand, there was the cigarette-case. Preston decided that this was a matter that must be attended to at once.

He had been waiting for Finch to come out of the room, meaning to strike him down, but, changing his mind, he returned to his own apartment and rang for a servant. When a footman appeared he asked where Griffith's room was. The man escorted him down the hall and pointed to a door next to that of Miss Hamilton's.

Without an instant's hesitation Preston knocked. There was a light over the transom, and immediate response came in the shape of a gruff "Come in."

Preston opened the door and entered. The prosecutor sat with his feet on the table; he had evidently been engaged in deep thought.

"So," he said, "you have come to confess."

But there was a significant gleam in his eye, which Preston, while not understanding, regarded as friendly and quizzical. Preston, as a consequence, smiled.

"Not exactly," he said, "but I've come in to ask *you* to confess." He looked at the man frankly. "Do you think I had anything to do with that murder?"

"I don't like to tell what I think," replied Griffith. He leaned forward, picking up the smoking stub of a cigar from the table. "Facts are the only things I really care to discuss."

Preston took the chair which Griffith indicated and faced the prosecutor with a hand on either knee. "I am more than eager to have you discuss anything that your mood suggests—facts or anything else," he said.

Griffith sat for a moment puffing upon his cigar. Finally he looked at Preston with the remark that he did not know whether or not he really should say what he had in mind, but that he intended, nevertheless, to do so.

"There are," he continued, "cases where facts as they appear do not jibe with one's impressions. For instance, I might know of various things which point strongly to a certain theory, while at the same time something within, a hidden voice, or an inner soul, or whatever you choose to term it, keeps whispering that the facts, logical though they may seem to be, are nonsense.

"Now, for instance, you." Griffith gazed at him piercingly. "What on earth made you stroll into my room to-night and ask me if I suspected you."

Preston tossed his hands in a gesture of irritation.

"I'll tell you why. I was on my way to the bath and heard Finch's voice coming out of the study. I caught my name and I listened." Preston's voice rose. "He and Miss Hamilton were discussing my guilt—my *guilt!* Finch was quite glib in affirming that you had me under suspicion, and Cecil seemed to think so, too, although refusing to believe I could have committed the crime."

"Is that all?" asked Griffith.

"No, not quite. I ask you: do you really think I had anything to do with all this horrid mess?" Preston paused. "If you do I should think you would have arrested me."

Griffith eyed him calmly.

"Thanks for the hint, Preston," he said, "but if it will do you any good to know it, you are, to all intents and purposes, under arrest at this moment, as you have been all day."

(*To Be Continued.*)

Reels and Realities

by Nell Freeman

EVER since the company had reached the "real" farmhouse which Manager Carlton had insisted upon for the biggest "release" of the season, Miss Dot Willson had been strangely abstracted. Her acting had been characterized by what an audience of admiring clubwomen would term "wonderful repression, don't you know—so rare on the screen."

But in reality she was only dreaming. Dreaming of another real farmhouse and fresh buttermilk and squash fritters and new-mown hay, and—yes, Miss Dot Willson, leading lady with the Oangee Company, would have to admit it—of one golden sunset and the old turnstile and the plain gold ring, and Jed Andrews, all red and sweaty from the hard day's work.

All was ready for the last scene. *Bud Jeffers* and *Sam Hillhouse,* of rival clans, shook hands over the dead bodies of four or five Hillhouses and as many Jefferses, and continued to shake; all of which was duly prescribed in the scenario.

But *Jennie Hillhouse* did not gallop around from the back of the cabin and fling herself from her foaming steed into the willing arms of *Bud Jeffers.* In fact, she failed to show up at all.

The camera man cursed, and the dead *Hillhouses* and *Jefferses* arose and joined in the search for the missing leading lady.

II.

THE crawling train ceased to move, and there issued forth from its mêlée of peanut-shells, crying children and fat women a young lady in modish garb, and in her eyes there shone the holy light of newly-discovered happiness.

Buck Raimer turned and stared.

"Wonder whut?" he muttered.

Rufe Hanby shifted his quid, adjusted his specs, spat, and gave vent to a low whistle.

"That's Sam Warner's gal, as shore as y're born," he said.

"Naw tain't, Rufe. You'll have ter guess agin. Them kind don't never come back. Sam ain't heard from her now in nigh four year. Pore fellow, looks like he's had a sight o'—well, I'll be gosh-durned, she's a-takin' that road, all right. Wonder now if that could be Sam's gal after all!"

Old man Warner put down his hoe, and with slow steps came forward to greet the young lady on his front doorstep.

"How're ye, stranger?" he drawled, and awaited an explanation of her presence.

"Don't you know me, pa?" And the big blue eyes slowly filled with tears, one of which dropped and splashed boldly on the tip of the neat patent leather boot.

Old man Warner gazed, and then a new light dawned on his withered countenance.

"My little gal," he said huskily, "I knowed you'd come back!" And Miss Dot Willson enacted the greatest emotional scene in her career as she was folded in the embrace of the old farmer.

Wiping her coarsened hands on a big checked apron, the old lady came out to see what was happening, and half-hiding behind her wide skirts, with that timid air peculiar to mountain children, was Horatio Warner, a lanky lad of twelve. The old lady gasped for breath as this strange young woman squeezed her tightly and called her "dear old ma."

III.

AFTER the late dinner of "snap" beans, potatoes, squash fritters, fresh buttermilk and cornbread, with the scent of new-mown hay assailing the nostrils of the hungry quartette, Ruth Warner (Dot Willson on the screen) donned one of her ma's blue calico "wrappers" and set out to wash the dishes.

As she was pouring out the greasy dish-water—on the spot by the hogpen where pa had "planted" some fishing worms—she said, stooping to examine the fishing bed in an effort to hide her blushes:

"Ma, couldn't Hotey run over and ask Jed to come around to-night? I thought we might have one of our old games of set-back."

"Law, child, I would 'a' told you, but I clean forgot. Jed ain't here no more. A crowd of them moving picture-folks come through here last month, and they liked Jed so well they give him a job. Buck Raimer had a picture postcard from him last week from California, and Jed says he's plumb crazy about actin'. Here, Hotey! Hotey! Fetch me a gourd o' cold water quick! I told yer pa the smell o' them English fishin' worms was enough to knock a body senseless!"

Five Dreadful Nights

by John Blunt

GALLWIN, lying in bed with his eyes wide open, felt that somebody was there in the dark with him. He could see and hear nothing for several moments. Presently the sound of breathing reached his ears. He had not been mistaken, then.

There *was* a burglar in his room! But, as he lay listening to that breathing, he felt his scalp pringle with the fear of the unknown that has come down through the centuries from our primitive ancestors.

No human being breathed like that! It was too hurriedly regular—more like the panting of an animal.

Raising himself on one elbow, Gallwin reached out to the reading-lamp that stood beside the head of his bed. He turned on the light—and a hoarse cry of horror escaped his lips.

What was that thing he had seen, crouching down before the opposite wall, in the instant before his fingers, tightening nervously upon the button, had involuntarily snapped out the light again?

It looked like an animal. But none such as Gallwin had ever seen behind the bars of a menagerie or even pictured in any work of zoology before. His mind retained but a hazy recollection of its form and stature.

It might have been as large as a full-grown panther or leopard, or only half that size. He knew that it was furred and possessed of a restless tail. Also that it had stood half erect upon its hind legs, after the fashion of an ape.

But the two fishy eyes that had been fixed upon him in a speculative stare, above a pair of lips drawn back in a toothless grin—those things were burned indelibly upon his memory.

Not how that beast, creature, thing had got there, but what was it doing, going to do, *now?* This the first question that shot into Gallwin's mind.

He found himself, without knowing how he got there, standing up in bed with the covers bundled protectingly around him, and his shoulders flattened against the wall above the headboard. The light—what was he thinking of not to turn it instantly on again? He could not stay there alone in the dark another second with that monster.

He reached out a second time to grope for the button and pressed it. The animal—or whatever it was—was gone.

At least it was no longer crouching by the wall in front of the foot of his bed, where he had seen it but two or three seconds before.

It might have crawled under the bed and be hiding there.

Gallwin, who was no coward, sprang to the floor and reached his closed typewriter desk in a single bound.

There was a heavy, brass paper-weight resting on the theater program that topped the piled-up pages of the manuscript on one end of the desk. Snatching up the missile, the young man flung it with all his force under the bed. Nothing happened.

Dropping to his hands and knees, Gallwin peered below the bed. The creature wasn't there.

He stepped to the open door of the sitting-room of his hotel suite. In a second more he had flooded that room as well with light from the wall-switch. If the beast was in it, he failed to see it anywhere.

Picking up the stoutest one of his canes, Gallwin walked around, poking it under the tables, chairs, couch, and behind the piano, until he had explored every nook and corner in which the thing could possibly have been hiding. It had gone. There was no lingering doubt of that left in his mind. But—how had it got out?

There were the two windows in his bedroom. Walking back there, Gallwin surveyed the sashes, both of which stood open for a couple of feet at top and bottom.

The beast might have crawled through either of those lower openings. But, if it had done so, it must have remained on the window-sill, where he would have been able to see it now. There was no fire-escape outside the windows—nothing but a sheer drop to the courtyard ten stories below.

Returning to the sitting-room, Gallwin looked up speculatively at the transom over the door that opened into the hotel corridor. He was in the habit of leaving it half open, and it stood that way now. There wasn't room enough, though, for an animal as large as that one had seemed to wriggle through it.

Only something the size of a cat could have done so—but maybe that was the explanation of the whole thing.

The shock of waking up to see a beast in his room might have caused him to magnify its proportions. The hotel probably owned a cat to keep the cellar free of rats and mice. It might have slipped up-stairs when no one was looking, come in through the open door of Gallwin's suite while the chambermaid was sweeping, and crawled under the bed, where it had remained asleep until a few minutes before.

That *must* be all it had been. And so there was nothing to prevent him from going back to bed and to sleep. Nothing but the jolts his nervous system had received.

He had never felt more wakeful than he had at that moment. Donning his dressing-gown and slippers, he sat down before his typewriter, lighted a cigarette, and picked up the manuscript to reread it critically for the tenth time.

It was the introductory chapter to his new book of essays on the stage that was to be brought out that fall by Crittenden & Mavis.

Hayden Gallwin's first volume on the subject, written in the breezy style that had given his column of dramatic criticism in the *Morning Meteor* so large a following, had met with rather more success than is commonly the fate of books of that sort.

But this one, he hoped, was going to prove even more popular. There was a reason, beyond his thirst for fame and dollars, why he wished that to happen.

Six months before he had met Laura Crittenden, the daughter of the senior partner of the publishing firm, who had invited him down to spend a week-end at the family's summer home on Long Island.

He had fallen in love with her, as she had with him. It was settled between them and her father that when he should have a certain amount of money in bank—which his royalties on this book might give him—they were to be married.

An hour later, yawning, Gallwin put down the manuscript and rose. He turned

out the lights in both the rooms — no longer afraid to lie down in the dark that might be infested by that fishy-eyed, grinning, tailed presence. It had been only a cat.

II.

It was two o'clock, as he afterward learned by consulting his watch, when Gallwin awoke the next morning. For two or three seconds he lay there with every nerve and muscle tense. Then again he heard that quick breathing that was like an animal's panting.

Not only heard—*but felt it!* The thing was leaning over him. Its face could not have been more than a few inches away from his own. With another stifled cry of terror, he leaped from the bed, and fumbled for a moment on his desk.

His fingers closed around something cold and cylindrical—his electric torch. Whirling, he pointed it in the direction of the bed and pressed the button.

In the yellow circle of light that sprang up before him he saw the creature crouching as though to spring upon him. It was the same weird half-beast, half-*what*, that he had glimpsed for but an instant the night before.

It was only for a second that he saw it now. He hurled the torch at the thing with all the strength of his arm. The next moment he had launched himself through the darkness to grapple with it.

His foot caught in the edge of the rug, and he sprawled on his hands and knees on the floor. Picking himself up, he struck wildly about him with his fists.

The blows smote only the empty air. His shoulder collided with a hard, sharp-edged surface—one side of the doorway between his parlor and bedroom.

He felt for the push-buttons of the electric light on the wall, and the next moment had illuminated the place. The beast was nowhere in sight.

He stepped back into the bedroom and lighted that up, too. Again he knelt and looked under the bed; but the creature was not there.

There was no other place that the animal could have hidden itself in that room. Gallwin looked reflectively at the door of the bathroom.

It was closed. To entertain the idea, even for a moment, that a beast could have opened and shut that door behind it, without making the faintest noise to betray its movements, was ridiculous. Nevertheless, Gallwin stepped forward and opened the door—to satisfy himself in a single glance that the specter he sought was not there.

He went to the nearest of the two windows, and, raising the bottom sash higher, put out his head to look up and down the whitewashed brick wall of the court. No animal could have climbed either up or down it.

He returned to the sitting-room. Arming himself once more with a cane, he poked and rattled it behind and underneath every article of furniture in the place. At the end of five minutes he dropped into a chair and surveyed the room from under a baffled frown.

Again, as on the night before, the thing had gone only a few seconds after he had seen it.

But how it had got out of his rooms, or into them in the first place, was an utter mystery.

What was that hair-raising beast, anyway? He was satisfied now that it was nothing as harmless as a cat. It was like some creature conjured up in a nightmare. Edgar Allan Poe might have imagined it as a recurring midnight visitor to one of the characters in his morbid tales. But Gallwin had actually *seen* it—the thing was a flesh-and-blood reality.

He got up and went to the door that opened into the corridor, trying the knob. It was locked. Passing through the bedroom, he repeated the test on the door of the adjoining suite—but stealthily, for fear of arousing its possible occupants—finding that it, too, was bolted.

Thoughtfully rubbing his chin, Gallwin went back to the sitting-room and halted in the middle of the floor. There was

the transom, standing half open. Having seen the creature for the second time, he was convinced that it could not have crawled through so small a space. Still, there was a way that he might be able to settle the question positively.

Stepping up from the couch onto the closed front of the piano in his bare feet, he knelt on the top of the instrument, from which he could inspect the frame in which the transom was set.

Along the bottom and the side of the woodwork nearest to him ran a film of dust—and that dust was without a mark to show that it had been disturbed!

Gallwin got down and found a cigarette which he inhaled with nervous rapidity. He was nervous; he admitted it to himself—as who would not have been in his place?

If there was no way that that horrifying beast could have got into his rooms, there was no way that it could have got out of them. *Ergo*—it must still be there. Not where he could any longer see it, though.

Sleep for the rest of that night was not to be thought of. Leaving the lights in both rooms turned on, Gallwin got a book and sat down to read. His lips were pressed firmly together. If that furred, expressionless-eyed, unnamable creature appeared again he made up his mind he was going to catch it.

But the thing did not return. When, at six o'clock, Gallwin rose and snapped off the lights, his eyes smarting from loss of sleep and his brain foggy from the numberless cigarettes he had smoked to keep himself awake, he was no nearer a solution of the mystery than he had been before.

III.

It was upon the gray light of early dawn that Gallwin opened his eyes the following morning.

Craning his head up from the pillow, he could make out the dim outline of his desk and the bureau—but what was that? That shadowy bulk that had crossed his straining vision for an instant and then passed as swiftly from his view once more?

What could there be in the room besides himself that could *move?*

It must be the thing again!

As before, Gallwin, in his imagination, could feel the creature's hairy, apelike paws closing around his throat. And, for the third time in as many nights, he flung off the bedclothes with a stifled shout of terror and sprang out upon the floor.

The light—he was out of reach of the reading-lamp now. But there was the electric torch that he had swept up from the top of his desk the night before. Now his fingers closed around the cylinder again.

He pressed the button. The light streamed out of the end of the leather-covered, nickel-trimmed stick. It showed him, for one second, the same furry monster with its swaying tail, fishy eyes, and toothless jaws parted in a grin.

And then—the light of the torch winked twice and went out. In vain Gallwin pressed the button. The thing was out of order—probably as a result of its collision with the opposite wall when he had flung it from him on the preceding night.

Again he hurled it in the direction in which he had last seen the beast. And a second time he launched himself through the semidusk that filled the room.

He bumped into the bureau, his outstretched arms sweeping his military brushes, collar-box, and a photograph of Laura in a silver frame from the top of it. Next it was the foot of the bed with which he collided.

Recoiling from the impact, he clasped both sides of the bathroom doorway, his forehead bumping the pier glass that was set into the closed door.

He was touching everything else in the room. Why couldn't he come into even accidental contact with the creature he sought?

The answer might be that the beast was no longer there. Groping his way to the

head of the bed, he turned on the reading-lamp. By its light he saw that his bedroom was empty.

So, also, when he snapped on the lights there, was his sitting-room. He ran back and flung open the door of the bathroom —it, too, was vacant.

He was up against the same unsolvable riddle of the two previous nights. One minute that hideous animal was there; the next it was not. Gallwin, raising his hand to wipe his brow, noticed that it was shaking.

Here—this wouldn't do, he told himself. He must keep his nerve. Otherwise he might go out of his mind.

He lowered himself slowly into a chair with his wide eyes fixed on the wall before him.

Suppose he were already mad?

He might not have seen that abortive beast any one of those three times. It might not have been there at all. He had simply imagined it. Not dreamed it; but, while wide awake, thought that he had seen it—proof that he was insane.

He sprang up and walked the floor. He *felt* all right. What was his name? Hayden Gallwin. The day of the week? Thursday? What was the opening performance he had attended that night, and the criticism of which he had sent down by a messenger-boy to the office of the *Meteor* before half past twelve? It was Brian Tillotson's new comedy, "Half a Loaf," with Evelyn Carter starring at the head of one of Vellastro's typically fine casts— Oh, he knew all those things all right.

But that amounted to nothing as a demonstration of whether he was perfectly sane or not.

The greatest lunatics had often been entirely lucid on all other subjects aside from their one hallucination.

Maybe that was the case with him. He was normal—except for the belief that he was being persecuted by a gibbering creature of hideous shape.

Overwork might have done it. He had felt, six weeks before, that he needed rest. Going to Foster, the *Meteor's* city editor, he had requested him to add a month's leave of absence without salary to the two weeks' vacation which he was to take in the middle of July.

"Thorpe ought to be able to cover the shows that may open while I'm gone," Gallwin had informed his superior. "I'm getting stale, and I'll do much better work for the lay-off, you'll see."

The city editor had granted his request. Gallwin, when the first week in July arrived, had informed the management of the hotel that he would be giving up his suite on the following Saturday.

And then the accident he had not foreseen had come to spoil all his plans.

Thorpe, the only reporter on the paper who was sufficiently versed in the technique of the drama to act as his substitute, had lunched not wisely but too well on oysters out of season. As a result he had suffered an attack of ptomaine poisoning. His doctor, calling the case as severe a one as he had ever met with, had announced that he could not think of quitting his house under two weeks—or it might not be for three.

Gallwin couldn't leave until the man was ready to take his place. Therefore, he had had to write to his fiancée and explain that he couldn't come to loaf for a month and a half at her parents' beautiful country home just yet.

And he had likewise notified the hotel's manager that he had changed his mind about giving up his rooms for the time being.

If only he had been able to get away at the time he had planned before this happened to him!

His mind *must* have broken down under the double strain he had put upon it of finishing one book and starting another and keeping up with his work for the newspaper at the same time.

It was some mental disease to which he had suddenly fallen victim that had made him think that he saw that beast. If he had been like the young man he had noticed in the hotel dining-room that

evening—drinking heavily—there might have been an excuse for his imagining a creature of the kind had disturbed his slumber three nights hand-running. But Gallwin did not drink.

His mind had collapsed. That was the only explanation of it.

He would find out whether it was or not, he determined with his teeth grimly locked, the first thing the next morning—that morning, since it was already daylight.

IV.

When, two hours later, Gallwin went down to breakfast, he said nothing, as on the two previous mornings, of the horror that had broken his rest.

To have reported to the management of the hotel that something alive but unrecognizable had got into his rooms—when, as three times Gallwin had satisfied himself, there was no way that it *could* have done so—well, that would have been sure to arouse in others the same doubts of his sanity which he had begun to feel.

As was to be expected, when he reached the office of the *Meteor,* he found that none of the morning newspaper's staff had yet arrived.

But the city room of the paper's evening edition, on the floor above, was ahum with the clatter of typewriters, the clicking of telegraph-keys, and the shuffle of office-boys' feet through the discarded papers that littered the floor, as they gathered up the reporters' copy, bore it to the rewrite desk, and thence to the linotype-room up-stairs.

Approaching one of the reporters who was sitting in momentary idleness, Gallwin offered him his cigarette-case.

"George, you ought to know," he began. "Who is the best specialist on nervous disorders? What's his address, and what are his office hours and fees?"

"Kendall Britton is the biggest man in that line, beyond a doubt," the other unhesitatingly replied. "You'll find his address in the telephone book. I've forgotten it. I interviewed him only once—the time he was testifying for the defense in the Jewett murder case."

The reporter was regarding Gallwin's pale face, where the record of the three troubled nights through which he had just passed was written in the dark shadows under his eyes, the tired droop of the corners of his mouth, and the pinched-in look of his nostrils.

"What's the matter, old man?" he asked with quick sympathy. "You don't think that you're—"

"It's not for myself," Gallwin evaded, "but for a friend of mine, that I wanted to know. He—er—he thinks he may have thrown some part of his brain out of gear by overwork. Naturally, he wants to find out as quick as he can—"

"Then send him to Britton," the reporter put in with a positive nod. "He'll tell him, fast enough, whether he's all right in the upper story or not. But his fees are steep, I understand. And so you'd better tip your friend off to be prepared to pay for the verdict."

Acting upon his fellow newspaperman's advice, Gallwin stopped at his bank and cashed a check before he went to the street in the Fifties where he had found out from the telephone book the noted nerve-specialist's office was situated.

But Gallwin walked by the high-stooped brownstone house when he came to it.

He took out his handkerchief and mopped the clammy moisture from his brow. He was afraid to go in and have his suspicions that there was anything the matter with his mind either verified or dispelled.

Suppose the psychopathist should tell him that he *was* crazy?

But he wasn't—so he reassured himself impatiently. That beast had been in his apartment three times. It was no apparition, no fantasy of an upset brain. He had seen a living creature of horrible aspect in the rooms he occupied in a hotel in the heart of New York City.

Unless—could this be the explanation of it? A reflection of the thing, perhaps,

had been thrown against the wall of his bedroom from the roof or window of some one of the surrounding buildings by a stereopticon or moving-picture machine.

That would account for the fact that it had got into his suite when there was no possible way that anything but a shadow could have done so. And also for its abrupt vanishing each time he had turned on the lights.

But—how about the breathing he had heard? The breathing he had *felt*, the time he had waked to find the beast leaning over him? That disposed of the theory that it could have been a trick worked with a magic lantern or anything of the sort.

Something alive had been there—either that, or he was mad. There was a way that he could settle the question of his sanity without going to the doctor—by capturing or killing the thing, if it reappeared that night.

Gallwin turned on all the lights in his suite when he entered it after dinner. Then, placing a revolver on the table, he sat down beside it with a book.

From time to time, as the hours passed, he rose and walked the floor to keep himself awake. Midnight came, then two o'clock, three—but the beast did not.

Waking with a start, Gallwin caught up the pistol and peered around him. He must have dropped off in his chair. But had it cost him anything—the chance of potting the creature which might have come and gone while he slept?

It was nowhere to be seen. He searched the bedroom, bathroom, and under the table, chairs, couch, and every other article of furniture in the sitting-room with a cane once more. It could not have been there—

With a gasp he stood as though rooted in his tracks, looking into the bedroom. On the floor beside the desk the brass paper-weight was lying. The thing was too heavy to have been swept off by a gust of wind from the two open windows. It could only have been knocked down by collision with a heavier bulk.

The thing had been there and gone!

Any fear he had felt that his mind was unbalanced Gallwin could dismiss now. It was something as bad—if not worse—that had befallen him, though. He was being watched over by some mysterious creature. Where it had sprung from, and why it should have singled him out to visit night after night, he did not know.

There was only one thing he did see clearly about the whole affair—what his duty was under the circumstances.

He owed it to Laura, as the girl who was waiting for him to make good so that they could be married, to write at once and tell her that their marriage might have to be indefinitely postponed. He couldn't even see her again until he had cornered that monster and made an end of it. The letter of explanation to his fiancée he wrote, took out, and dropped into the mail chute in the hotel corridor within the next hour.

V.

As on the first night when he had discovered the presence of that elusive animal in his room, Gallwin was staring with wide-open eyes into the darkness a little after one o'clock the next morning.

He had been waiting again for the beast to appear, but this time with all the lights in his suite turned out—thinking that might hasten the creature's arrival.

Now he rose stealthily and felt with one hand under the shade of the reading-lamp beside his bed. His other hand held the revolver in readiness for instant action. That sound of quick breathing had reached his ears again to tell him that the beast was there.

He snapped the button. The light filled the bedroom—not a second too soon. Gallwin drew hasty aim and fired at the monster—the tail of it, rather, *which was disappearing through one of the two opened windows!*

Bounding forward, Gallwin flung up the sash and thrust out his head into the

night. Again he caught only a glimpse of the creature's tail. It was vanishing through the window of the suite of rooms that adjoined his own.

Gallwin ran to the door of his apartment, unlocked it, and sped along the corridor in his slippers and dressing-gown to pound upon the door of that next suite.

"What's the matter?" demanded the man who opened it—a man Gallwin had never seen before in his life, so far as he knew.

"That's what I'd like to know!" blurted out Gallwin, staring back curiously at the stranger. "What ails *you?* Are you a lunatic? You let a beast of some sort into my room—don't deny it! There it is, sitting up on the corner of the table behind you. A monkey! I couldn't see it clearly any one of the five times—"

"All right, don't get sore!" the man admonished Gallwin with a sheepish grin. "You've caught me. But I was only working under orders—your uncle's. He doped out this way to make you stop drinking; by giving you a scare. Maybe if you thought you'd got to the point where you were 'seeing things,' he figured—"

"What are you talking about?" Gallwin broke in. "I haven't got any uncle; and I don't drink."

The man's smile faded and a pucker of anxiety appeared between his brows.

"Say, if I've made a mistake I'm sorry," he said. "I was hired to come here and take the next suite to 1019. It was going to be given up by the party who'd been staying in it, I heard, and taken by a young fellow who'd lived in it once for four or five years, and who always took it if it was vacant whenever he came to town. But I don't see why the fellow's uncle was not told by the manager—"

"I do, though," cut in Gallwin grimly. "Go on. You came here with this monkey—"

"To let it into those rooms, and hand the young fellow I supposed was in 'em the shock that would put him where his uncle wanted to see him—lashed tight to a seat on the water-wagon," continued the other.

"I explained to the clerk at the desk that the monk, which is an old one without any teeth, as you can see, was a trained one that I did an act in vaudeville with. It didn't take much time to teach it to climb from my window-sill to yours on a string, which I pulled to make it come back out of your room each time. I'm sorry as I can be, old man, if I handed you a scare by mistake—"

"That's something we're all liable to make," interrupted Gallwin, straightening with a sigh of relief. "I made one last night myself—as you've just shown me. And now, if you'll excuse me, I'll go and rectify it. In the form of a night-letter to my—er—my future wife!"

FLOWER-OF-GOD

THERE blooms a flower divinely fair
That springs from Love's own sod;
Men call it "Friendship," but I dare
To call it "Flower-of-God."

To earth its roots are firmly bound,
To heaven the perfume flies;
It's blooming-place is holy ground,
Watched o'er by angel eyes.

They who upon their heart of hearts
This perfect flower shall wear
Know all the joy that earth imparts,
And all that heaven may share.

Clarence Urmy.

Clipping the Vampire's Claws

by Joseph Ivers Lawrence

LITTLE Mrs. Fred Crandall uttered a cold, hard laugh and shrugged her adorable shoulders as Mr. Crandall, ruddy and robust, with a growing tendency to embonpoint, excused himself just before dinner-time with the explanation of an engagement at his club.

"It's quite all right, old boy," she said —"old boy," spoken in a hollow, world-weary voice, being one of several lately acquired accomplishments of hers—"it's quite all right. We must live our own lives, yes?"

He raised his eyebrows and looked at her inquiringly. Dining at the club seemed, in the case of a man of his marked domesticity, scarcely a manifestation of the living of one's own life, but Rose had been given to cryptical utterances of late, and he shrugged his shoulders in turn and quietly left the house.

The lady fixed her diminutive, satin-slippered feet comfortably on the *chaise-longue* and lay back luxuriously among the billowing cushions to read a Russian novel until dinner-time.

The telephone rang, and when the maid announced that some one wished to speak with Mrs. Crandall, Rose sighed and languidly took up the extension instrument placed conveniently near her elbow.

"Oh, Harry!" she exclaimed brightly, as she heard the voice. "How fortunate! I am left all alone; Mr. Crandall is dining at his club. Come right up here, won't you—in a taxi—and have dinner with me? Dinner must be got through somehow, you know, but it's stupid to dine alone."

Mr. Harry Keating, at the other end of the wire, spoke in a voice charged with portentous gloom.

"No, I am not coming to dine with you, Rose — not in — in another man's house!" he said heavily. "I had to speak to you. I have lived through a terrible day, Rose; I don't want to know another day like it."

"Why, Harry!" she cried. The hand that held the instrument trembled a little, a startled look widened her eyes, but her full, tender lips moved in a slow smile.

"I have come to the Rubicon," the young man went on tragically. "I find that I can't turn back; I have got to cross it, or plunge in. Listen, Rose: I must see you to-night. I have come to the parting of the ways, and it means—life—to me; life, or the closing of the book!"

A thrill passed over the listening lady, but she still smiled. The young man had never talked quite like that before, but it was rather fascinating. It was very dramatic and stirring, she thought, for a man to break into metaphor, even if he mixed it a trifle in his stress of mind.

"Harry," she said, as softly as the telephone would allow, "you mustn't—take life too seriously, you know. You—"

"Seriously!" he cried, and his voice reverberated in the instrument. "Great Heaven! can you say that to me? Rose, you must come to me, now—if only to say good-by. I cannot enter that—that house again; you must come to me. I am waiting for you, here at the Devonshire. Roscoe Dillon has loaned me his apartment, and—"

"How could I come to a bachelor apartment, Harry?" she demanded. "It would be—"

"And you can say that!" he cried, almost angrily. "You want to discuss the conventionality of it, when I—when I—Oh, I can't believe it! Very well, Rose; stay with your wretched respectability. Say good-by to me, as icily as you please, over this—this wire, made of cold metal. Perhaps it will make it only the easier for me. If I must be alone—at the last—"

"Harry!" she exclaimed sharply, "what are you talking about? You scare me when you talk in such a—such a creepy, scary way!"

"Will you come to me, if only to let me touch your hand once more?" he demanded wildly.

The telephone nearly fell from her hand, and she gasped for breath. She was at once vaguely frightened and bewilderingly thrilled. The spirit of high adventure seized her; judgment and discretion retreated, overwhelmed.

"Harry!" she called, trying to hold her voice steady, "I'll come. I oughtn't to do it, you know, but I'll come just to talk with you for a moment."

"Such a moment," he declared hoarsely, "is more to me than a lifetime! Come quickly, Rose! Don't change your mind; I couldn't endure a disappointment now."

She was going to discuss the matter a little further, but he rang off and left her breathless and wildly excited.

She sat for a minute, thinking, her hands clasped tensely in her lap, then she forced a little, hard laugh, to give her courage, and flew to her room.

In half the time that she usually allowed for dressing, she put on a gown of wonderful rose-colored silk and black net, and she added some ornaments of rose-gold set with tourmalines at her neck and wrists.

Rose Crandall was twenty-one, and only two years married, but life had dispelled some of her earlier illusions. Her handsome, gallant husband was growing tranquilly portly, and while he had seemed to subsist on truffled pheasant and mushrooms during their courtship, he had confessed after marriage to a taste for boiled beef and cabbage, to say nothing of mountainous plates of pancakes and "smelly" sausage.

Rose read much in French and Russian literature, with side dashes into the works of American imitators, and she had taken to going to the better "movie" theaters of afternoons. She had seen a soulful-eyed, sinuous film star in Prosper Merimée's "Carman," and the same reptilian creature in later rôles of a similar man-smashing nature, and it had been slowly, bewilderingly, awfully, fatefully borne in upon her that she herself was cut out by destiny to be a human vampire.

She had not told Fred. Such information could not be imparted over pancakes and coffee, and he was always too tired and absurdly, heavily humorous at the dinner-table. He would not have understood, anyway. Americans, she discovered, never could understand women.

She adjusted the tourmalines until the picture in her mirror gave her a tiny secret thrill, then pressed her small feet into rose-colored slippers, threw on a white-furred, sunset-hued opera cape, and stole mysteriously out of the house and to the taxi stand at the corner of the avenue.

Ten minutes later she faltered out an assumed name to the coldly reserved clerk at the Devonshire bachelor apartment hotel, and was taken up to the scene of what promised to be her first really big adventure in the soulful art of vampiring.

"Rose!" cried the pale, sensitive-faced Harry Keating, and caught both her hands in his strong cold fingers, drew her into the luxurious, softly lighted room, and closed the door.

"Don't, Harry!" she protested, and tried to steady her quivering chin and make her voice cold and worldly. "I have—risked my reputation in coming here—at your bidding. Now, you must be calm, and we must talk like—like sensible people."

"Reputation! Sensible people!" he groaned. "Oh, is it always like this? Women! women! Rose Cran— No! I can't speak that name! Rose, are you satisfied, now that my life, my soul, is flung bleeding upon your woman's altar of merciless vanity? Are you—"

She checked him with upraised hand and a little startled exclamation. Her eyes grew round and wild as she glanced at the table and saw a shining revolver lying in the light of the lamp.

"Wha—what's that for, Harry?" she faltered.

"Surcease!" he announced in an awful voice, and passed a white, shaking hand over his forehead and through his rumpled hair. "Did you think, Rose, that I was posing, that I was playing a dramatic rôle like a mouthing actor? You stand with me, woman, at the fork of the roads. Will you go away with me—to some place beyond the confines of this damnable, ranting, prating society, or are you prepared to fly with me beyond the bounds of life—of human existence?

"We shall go where—where there is no more misery, at any rate. I must have life, or I must have a dreamless sleep. Are you ready to go with me, or must I go alone—into the blackness? Must I leave you here—perhaps to gloat upon the memory of a—a poor fool? One more poor moth scorched in the rosy flame!"

Mrs. Crandall sank into a chair, faint and weak. She gasped for breath, twisted her jeweled fingers into the folds of her cloak, and then broke into sudden wild sobbing.

"You—you're utterly mad!" she cried, when she could speak at all. "I'm—not such an awful—awful woman as that! You haven't any reason to say or think all those frightful things, Mr. Keating. I have only treated you as — as a good friend. I am hap—happily married, and I don't love you at all; I never could, you know; I never pretended to—to care for you, in such a way. You're very foolish, and—and outrageous. I ought to feel quite—offended, you know!"

The young man stared at her uncomprehendingly. His mouth fell open and he passed his hand again and again over his pallid brow.

"You don't—love me!" he murmured dully. "Happily married! Ought to feel offended! Ah, what a gray and ugly tragedy is this! But it's the end! Good-by, Rose! Good-by, you creature of ice and marble!"

He snatched the revolver from the table, but, as she screamed, he thrust it into his pocket, then clapped a hat upon his head and dashed out of the room.

She shrieked at him to come back, but when she flung herself at the door, it was locked.

"Try to calm yourself, Mrs. Crandall, and don't worry about that young idiot," said a deep, resonant voice behind her.

She turned with a nervous cry and beheld a man standing upon the threshold of the adjoining room. It was Roscoe Dillon, the owner of the apartment, thirty-five years old, or more, and an intimate friend of her husband.

"Mr. Dillon!" she gasped, and collapsed again in the chair. "Oh, Mr. Dillon, please help me!" she pleaded miserably. "I have been so reckless, so utterly insane! Think what it would mean to Fred if he heard of this! You're a gentleman, Mr. Dillon, and you would never tell of anything that you have heard to-night, would you? Mr. Keating made me come here, by—by treachery. I never dreamed that you were here."

"Is it such a terrible thing—to have me here?" asked the man in a soft, insinuating tone. He came to the side of her chair and looked down at her with a smile that did not reassure her.

"I want to go home, Mr. Dillon," she wailed. "Will you please call a cab and help me to leave here without being seen?"

"All in good time, dear lady," he said, or rather purred. "You must calm yourself and be comfortable and easy of mind. I shall order a little dinner for us—for you and me."

"No, no!" she cried; "I couldn't do that. But—oh, Mr. Dillon, you must do something about Harry Keating! He has a revolver, and he was terribly wild and desperate. He will—"

"Never fear," said the man. "Harry is probably taking dinner at his club by this time. His spasms do not last long. I am quite accustomed to them. He's forever getting ready to blow out his rather scanty brains for some beautiful and merciless woman. No, no, my dear, he'll be well over this awful romance and ready for a fresh one by to-morrow."

"Do you mean it?" she gasped. "Why, the disgusting little brute!"

"That's just it!" chuckled the big man; "a disgusting little brute. You couldn't care much for a young puppy like that, Mrs. Crandall, of course. You are young, beautiful—everything that is adorable, but your mind is mature; you can't be bothered with young striplings. I have dared to flatter myself, Mrs. Crandall, that you and I were a—a congenial pair of mortals. I think—if you won't be afraid of me, my dear, that we'll get on very well together. Come, let me take that heavy cape from your shoulders. I'll light the fire and order a little dinner, and we'll turn this into—rather a pleasant evening, eh?"

Mrs. Crandall started to her feet and drew away from the man as he moved a little closer to her.

"I'm afraid you misjudge me, Mr. Dillon," she said coldly. "I am — I am astonished that you can talk like this! You are one of Mr. Crandall's friends, and—"

"The friendship of men is a small matter when the love of woman crosses it!" declared Dillon, his voice growing harsh. "No, I don't think I misjudge you, Mrs. Crandall: I have watched you, I have listened to your voice, and seen the changing lights in your eyes; I have felt the soft pressure of your hand, and I am sufficiently experienced in the world to know when I have the good fortune to attract the favorable notice of a lovely woman."

"You beast!" cried little Mrs. Crandall, and her eyes flashed fire. "Let me out of this horrible place. I will go home and tell my husband. He will see you and say things to you that I cannot!"

The man, to her added terror, laughed loudly.

"You have some courage for a little slip of a girl!" he exclaimed. "I would not venture such a confession to husband, if I were you. He won't like it a bit, you know. Husbands don't care about having their pretty wives visit bachelor apartments clandestinely, do they now? It's getting late, you see, and I don't dream of letting you go until we have that little dinner, my dear. After that, I'll take you home, and you can get away with some story about having been to a theater party. You'll become more expert in life's little dissemblings after I have given you a course of instruction."

"Let me out, or I'll scream for help!" she cried madly. "I'll break the window; I'll kill you if you come near me!"

"Please be calm," he said patiently.

"You can't trifle with your reputation any more, dear lady. You can only save it, now, by listening to me and leaving all the arrangements in my hands. Come, be sensible! It's too late for confessions and that sort of absurdity. We'll let old Fred Crandall dwell in blissful ignorance of the fact that his little wife is a real human being, and you and I will find how congenial we are to each other."

He held out his hands and took a step toward her.

She fled around the table and took refuge behind a huge chair.

"Oh, haven't you a spark of manhood in you?" she wailed. "Haven't you a single feeling of pity, of mercy? I—I am the victim of my own wretched foolishness. Oh, Mr. Dillon, I'm not a wicked woman! I love my husband—he's the best man in the world. I've been idiotic and insane; I thought I was being romantic and— Oh, something like the women you read about. But I don't want to be—human! I want to go home; I want to go home and stay there. If I can only get Fred to believe in me again I'll never speak to another man except him and my father and brother!"

She broke down and sobbed violently, and as Dillon stood silent, the curtains of the adjoining room parted again, and another voice rang through the apartment.

"What is the meaning of this?" demanded the voice, and little Mrs. Crandall started up, gasping, and met the flashing eyes of her husband.

"Fred! Fred!" she screamed, and flung herself into his arms. "Oh, Fred," she cried in mad excitement, "I've been so terribly foolish. But—you must—Fred, you must kill that man!"

She pointed a shaking hand at Dillon and tragedy spoke in her pose and voice.

To her amazement her husband laughed.

"What, kill the doctor?" he queried. "Come, now, Rosie, this has been pretty hard on a poor little girl, hasn't it? But desperate case need desperate remedies, you know. If you're entirely cured of that vampire distemper, we'll go home and forget all about it."

She drew away from him, and looked coldly, wonderingly from one man to the other.

"We may as well 'fess up," continued her husband. "Old Dillon here isn't a sixteenth part as bad as he has just painted himself. There aren't many men as bad as they paint themselves, dear, or women either. We have been watching your progress in the art of vampire, and we have seen that you were not cut out for it. A desperate remedy was needed, so we decided that two of my best friends were the persons qualified to take the case.

"You'll admit that Harry Keating is a pretty fair actor, particularly as he is madly devoted to the girl he is secretly engaged to. Old Dillon, here, invented most of the little drama, and I must say that he acted his part a trifle more temperamentally than I expected. It wasn't exactly my cue to come out when I did, but I thought it was time for the final curtain. So please forgive us all, my dear, and forget the whole business as quickly as you can. Don't, by any means, hold it against poor Dillon."

Rose drew herself up haughtily.

"I hope that I may never see Mr. Dillon or Mr. Keating again," she said coldly. "As for you, Fred—we'll go home, now!"

"Your sense of humor will straighten the whole thing out in a day or two," said Crandall, grinning at his accomplice. "But you're quite cured, aren't you, dear?"

"I never want to see another man!" declared his wife."

"I suppose that doesn't include me?" queried her husband.

"I shall understand you better after this," she answered. "I never believed you capable of such treachery, Fred. I have a knowledge of *men*, now, and perhaps our married life will be all the better for it. At any rate, I shall never trust a man again."

The Log-Book

By the Editor

HAVE you ever noticed a crowd on the street, taken a few steps toward it on the natural impulse to find out what was the matter, and then drawn back, checked by the thought that possibly you would be "hunting trouble" in the shape of a summons to court as a witness after the fact? Consider, then, *William Layton's* state of mind when he walks into the Philadelphia garage he owns, prepared to start on a day's work, and discovers that a dead body is lodged in one of the cars that has been stored there. It is with this incident that our February complete novel,

"IN THE BLUE LIMOUSINE"

BY REESE DAVIS JAMES AND LAURA CLAYTON KING

opens, and when to the questions of the police over a certain bit of evidence that seems to connect him with the crime, *Layton* can reply only with closed lips, it is small wonder that he is placed under arrest without bail.

"But what sort of a story can you make with your hero in jail?" I think I hear some reader exclaim.

Well, Mr. James and Miss King will show you next month that they can make an extraordinarily good one, replete with thrills, and holding the interest in suspense right through to the twentieth chapter. It is by no means a prison story either. In fact, I believe only one scene takes place behind bars. Now, I am sure I have awakened your curiosity along new lines, and that you will make sure to be on hand at the news-stand on Saturday, January 13, to get your February ARGOSY at the earliest possible moment.

If you have ever been in Washington, you may have noticed what a fine building the Library of Congress is. Well, it has been estimated by some one that a good share of the money spent in running this great institution is derived from the fees paid in by people who wish to copyright plays they have written. When I tell you that it costs only one dollar to go through this process (fifty cents if you don't wish a receipt), you may judge as to the number of plays written every year. That they don't all get produced is a cinch, that of those that are produced not one in a hundred succeeds is also a certainty; but still every one of the millions who makes the attempt hopes that he or she will be the lucky one to win out.

Now, in a short story I am going to give you next month, one of these aspiring playwrights is the hero. After such a series of discouragements as falls out to every one

who invades the field, he evolves a theory that I am sure will be of interest to you whether you have ever written a play or not. In any case, I wish you would write and tell me what you think of—

"ONCE IN A LIFETIME"
BY NEIL MORAN

There will be lots of other good things in the February number, including a winter baseball yarn, "Doing for the Yap," and a new kind of narrow escape in automobiling, entitled "The Car of Many Regrets."

THANKS FROM SOUTH AMERICA

Our business department has informed Mr. Stewart as to the subscription rates and the cost of the back numbers he wants mailed to Chile, so he won't miss "Southwest of the Law" in this number, which, being laid in South America, I imagine will be of especial interest to him. For you all like to read of the localities familiar to you. Am I right?

Tocopilla, Chile.

Just a little thanks from South America for the good things in THE ARGOSY. I have been reading this magazine for a number of years, but since I have been south of the line I have not been in very close touch with it. American magazines are quite scarce in these Spanish-speaking countries, and consequently are very precious. I recently acquired a copy of your June, 1916, issue, containing the complete novel, "Ships of Strife," which I enjoyed very much. It is these long, book-length novels that make THE ARGOSY the great magazine it is.

I never make any kicks if I can help it, but I do not like serials. I guess that is enough to say about them, as I am not running the magazine. I was very much interested in a serial in the issue above mentioned, and not being able to obtain the following issues I have been disappointed. I refer to "His Mad Move on the Movies." Would you kindly tell me what THE ARGOSY would cost, postage paid to Tocopilla, Chile, for a year, and I will send you a check for the subscription, and advise whether it is possible to obtain the back numbers containing "His Mad Move on the Movies."

A. A. STEWART.

HIS MONEY'S WORTH IN THE NOVELS ALONE

Mr. David will be glad to hear that I have told my authors to cut short their stories intended for serial publication, so after those now running are ended, the long-drawn-out type will be conspicuous by its absence.

Stockland, Illinois.

I am enclosing one dollar for my subscription to THE ARGOSY for one year. I have been reading it ever since about 1902, with the exception of one year when I was in a place where it could not be obtained, as there was no newsdealer in the town. I am very well pleased with the magazine in its present form, much better than when the serials were long drawn out. If a person does not like serials, he can get his money's worth out of the complete novels and the short stories, and not read the serials at all. It would be an utter impossibility for an editor to satisfy every one with the stories he accepts for publication; but from what I read in the Log-Book, I think the satisfied readers are very much in the majority. I am not going to name any certain stories that pleased me, but if you continue the high grade of reading matter, I will not have a kick coming.

R. E. DAVID.

SOME STORIES HE DIDN'T CARE FOR

This letter, from "the sunny hills of Tennessee," in some way possesses a particular appeal to me, possibly because the writer was so frank in naming the stories that he liked and those that he didn't care for so much. Of course, if he had only been able to state what it was, for instance, that "Phyllis of Fountain Square" lacked, the comment would have been more enlightening; but then I suppose I must not expect Log-Book contributors to be actual critics as well. So let your comments flow in, just as the spirit moves you to set them down, and I shall be glad to read them all, and use as many as I can possibly find room for.

Atwood, Tennessee.

Have just finished my ARGOSY for November, and thought I would add a line to the Log. THE ARGOSY is one of my favorite periodicals, and I certainly do enjoy reading it every month. Like some others, I never notice the author's name, but begin the story, and if it suits me (and it generally does), I finish it and read another; but I always save the complete novel for the last. The story, "Who Is Charles Avison?" was the silliest I ever read, and "Peacocks for Cæsar" was another story that did not appeal to me very much, while the November novel, "Phyllis of Fountain Square," to my idea, is not quite up to THE ARGOSY standard. When one had finished the reading, it seemed disappointing, seemed to lack something.

Now, this is not a "knocking" letter, and no two persons are alike, for while I did not like these stories, perhaps there were others that were pleased to read them. As to your request regarding "Western stuff," I will say that I do not care much for it, and had rather read stories on the order of "Those Eyes from Karna," "His Isle of Refuge," "Hello, Somebody!" "Disproving a Sure Thing," and "Blood Will Tell." Neither do I care for stories of the great war. I have no favorite authors, and will say that the interest of any story depends on the treatment given by the writer. I certainly like the actual place stories, and would be glad to see a complete novel that had the sunny hills of Tennessee for a setting.

EDW. PARIS.

AN ARDENT ADMIRER OF "PHYLLIS"

Here's a reader positively enthusiastic over our November novel. Mrs. Baldwin will be delighted to learn that another of Perley Poore Sheehan's stories, "Four-Forty at the Fort Penn," will appear in the March issue, and for the comfort of Mr. Paris, who didn't especially care for "Phyllis," I will add that the Pittsburgh novel is of an absolutely different character from the one which had Cincinnati for its theme.

Sacramento, California.

I have been a constant reader of your lovely magazine now for more than eight years, although I am not a subscriber. I don't believe I have missed a copy in all that time. Your serial story, "Those Eyes from Karna," was simply great, and would like to see some more stories from Mr. Foxhall. "Phyllis of Fountain Square"—I never have seen its equal. Long live Perley Sheehan that we may have some more of those stories. I alway get my ARGOSY as soon as it comes out. I have already read the November and am patiently waiting to read some more of "Daring the Danger Zone."

MRS. C. A. BALDWIN.

THE LATCH-STRING OUT FOR THE NEW AUTHOR

I am glad to make room for the letter below, as it praises a new contributor, and thus lends force to my contention that editors are not averse to buying manuscripts from unknown authors, disproving the repeated assertions of the disappointed ones that they are.

New York City.

The writer is taking advantage of the opportunity offered by the Log-Book to express an opinion on a story in your November issue. While going over the short stories, I came across one by an Emmett Conway, entitled "When Amateurs Play in the Movies." It was, to my mind, the best short story I have ever read in your magazine, taking all things into consideration, especially so since the author had the movies just right. My main reason in addressing you is that I had not noticed any of Mr. Conway's work before, and, if this is any criterion, it must be more than worth while.

EDWARD C. RILEY.

WHEN THE EDITOR BLUSHES

Business of blushing on the part of the editor as he edges in the subjoined. You will understand why when you read it.

Chicago, Illinois.

Your magazine is getting better all the time, and the Log-Book, in the readers' praise and condemnation, gives me all the thrills from the sublime to the ridiculous. In other words, instead of praising each author, I want to hand a compliment to the editor, who is certainly a connoisseur in the selection of all-around first-class authors. Enclosed find check for year's subscription as "proof of the pudding" that I like THE ARGOSY.

JOHN W. GRAY.

MANY MEN OF MANY MINDS

Hark back to the letter from Mr. Paris, then note what Mr. Denby has to say about "Who Is Charles Avison?" and next link up the latter's comment on "The Abduction at Del Rancho" with what is said about the same story by Mr. Summers further on. Verily, it is not to be wondered at that the Log-Book makes exciting reading when such things can be.

Rochester, New York.

The worst story I ever read in THE ARGOSY was "The Abduction at Del Rancho," which was very bad. One of the best, "Who Is Charles Avison?" I first bought your magazine because of its low price and attractive cover, which promised good stories. I would prefer the serials complete in one magazine, as I don't like to leave off an interesting story.

CHARLES W. DENBY.

P. S.—Most of your stories are excellent.

AS TO A NORTHERN STORY

Mr. Summers and many other readers who have asked for northern stories will be delighted to know that I have just accepted a complete novel of that nature to be run in a month or two. It's the tale of an expedition setting off to explore lands within the polar circle, and has the most unique plot of anything of the sort I have ever come across.

Mahaska, Kansas.

I see in the November Log you ask for an expression of opinion from your readers in regard to the cowboy and Western stories, and for one will say that I am for them—both Western and northern stories. I have finished "Phyllis of Fountain Square," by Perley Poore Sheehan, and "The Abduction at Del Rancho," by Marie B. Schrader, and find them extremely interesting. And, Log-Book friends, let's not kick on what our editor is now giving us, for I am sure that every one of us is getting more than the worth of our money, and as long as I can raise the price, I expect to pay my subscription to THE ARGOSY in advance, and not miss a copy. So,

dear Log-Book friends, let's not kick, but be one big, happy family of ARGOSY boosters. My occupation is clerk in the post-office, so I have the opportunity to read a great deal in idle moments and read a great many stories, but so far I have been unable to find anything better than THE ARGOSY is giving us.

J. L. SUMMERS.

WHY HE DIDN'T CARE FOR "PHYLLIS"

In his criticism of "Phyllis of Fountain Square," Mr. Stacey tells, you will note, one reason why he does not rate it as highly as he does other novels. I wish to thank him for his honest expression of opinion and his courtesy in answering my query as to Western stories.

Clover, South Carolina.

Enclosed you will find check for one dollar for my sixteenth or seventeenth year's subscription. It seems to be the only magazine that I cannot quit taking. If THE ARGOSY is not on time or misses there is almost a row in the family. As to the make-up of serials, *et cetera*, it suits me exactly, and from the comments in the Log-Book I believe it pleases eighty per cent or more of your readers. My method of reading it is almost the reverse of the arrangement of the stories. I usually finish the oldest serial first, read the short stories at intervals when I have only a few minutes to spare, and read the complete novel last.

I very often find stories that I do not like, but realize the fact that I am getting more than my money's worth, and I therefore have no kick coming, only a friendly criticism of "Phyllis of Fountain Square." It is a fairly good story, but, in my opinion, not nearly up to your complete novels of the past. In a way, it was very transparent to me, as I realized who *Phyllis* was and had the ending pretty accurately doped out before I was half-way through it.

In regard to your question as to Western stories, I must admit that I like them, but like all other kinds also, for variety. Here's to a continuance of the success of THE ARGOSY.

J. L. STACEY.

ROLLING UP A WESTERN MAJORITY

The ayes would appear to have it on Western stories. Here's a word from yet another reader favoring them. "Daring the Danger Zone," now running, is the sort of thing they should all be crazy about. As to baseball, Mr. Reynolds cannot fail to be tickled by "Doing for the Yap," scheduled for next month.

Colorado Springs, Colorado.

I have read THE ARGOSY for about two years now, and think it is some magazine. You asked in November whether "Western stuff" had gone out of style. I don't think it has here. I sure like to see Western stories. Bring on a baseball story once in a while also.

H E. REYNOLDS.

REMEMBER THE 15TH IS ARGOSY DAY

You've all heard the phrase, "Do your Christmas shopping early." While it may be too late to remind you to do that for this year, the suggestion holds good each month with respect to getting your ARGOSY from the news-stand. Witness the plight of Mr. Ward as detailed below in a letter enclosing his dime.

New York City.

Will you kindly send me a copy of the October ARGOSY? I am a regular reader of it, but have been unable to get the October issue anywhere. They must have sold like hot cakes. I have tried about a dozen places in the last two weeks in different parts of the city and could not get it. I am glad to see it is so popular. You want to get after the newsdealers to carry more of them in stock than they do.

JOHN WARD.

THE GREATEST TEN CENTS' WORTH

I have in the safe another excellent story by Seward Hopkins, which I hope to use during the year, also several by the author of "The Kid That Came Back."

Gouverneur, New York.

I have just finished reading "The Man Hunt on Capitol Hill" and thought it was splendid. Please give us some more of Mr. Hopkins's stories, will you? I think he is just excellent as an author. "The Kid That Came Back" is a fine story, and all of my friends think the same as I do in regard to THE ARGOSY. That is, that it's the greatest magazine on earth for ten cents. I think that Mr. Greenwood (October Log) is exactly right when he says that the kickers are sure food for the squirrels. Give us some more of Jackson and Jones, will you?

HOSSIE KINNEY.

A MILITARY WINDFALL

I certainly am pleased to hear that Mr. Nelson made such admirable disposition of his back numbers. His mention of the fact may prove a helpful suggestion to others who are seeking to gain additional storage-room in their homes and make others happy at one and the same time.

Decatur, Alabama.

I have been a subscriber for many years, and your magazines are always good. It may please you to know that I had every number of THE ARGOSY from 1904 to date and that I sent them to the soldiers' camp on the Mexican border. I know they were pleasant reading.

L. RAY NELSON.

LIKES SERIALS BEST

Mr. McGuire should certainly be pleased with the present number of serials—more than we have been carrying for some time. But I cannot

promise to keep this up, as I must try to please the big mass of readers, and I believe this can only be done by judicious variety in the make-up of each number.

Dellrose, Tennessee.

I have been a constant reader of THE ARGOSY for two years, but have only been a subscriber for a year. Previous to this I bought same from the news-stand. I enjoy reading the Log-Book, and would not think of doing without THE ARGOSY for the small sum of one dollar per year. My favorite authors are Hopkins, Smale, and George Foxhall. Come with some more of those good stories. I am no kicker, but I like serials the best and not so many short stories.

R. H. MCGUIRE.

A SHOT GAVE HIM THE ARGOSY

I trust that it will not be considered necessary to shoot a man in the leg in order to make him a reader of THE ARGOSY. I am indebted to Mr. Wright for complying with my request, and am wondering whether there are any more strange fashions in which readers became acquainted with our magazine.

North Bend, Washington.

I saw a request in the Log-Book to tell how the readers became acquainted with THE ARGOSY. A year ago last May I shot myself in the left leg and was confined to the bed for a week. A friend of mine gave me an ARGOSY, the novelette was a fine story, and ever since I have been a reader of THE ARGOSY and the *All-Story Weekly*.

FLOYD WRIGHT.

SOME GOOD OLD STORIES

How many responses to the suggestion of Mr. Edwards?

Box B., Tulsa, Oklahoma.

I have been reading the letters from some "constant readers," "old subscribers," "old friends," *et cetera*, and I wondered how many really old readers there were.

I have been reading some of the different Munsey publications for several years, and I wonder if any of the present readers will remember "The Great Cat's-Eye of Buddha," "The Diamond Cargo," "Beyond the Great South Wall," "Daggers Drawn," and that story of the Southwest, in which *Jerkwater Rollins*, an old rancher, was a leading character.

I was looking through some old books recently and came upon a copy of THE ARGOSY, printed in 1895, and among the stories which came somewhat later "The Frontier of the Stars" stands out in my memory as one of the most interesting.

And then there was the story of the railroad being built through some mythical state in Southeastern Europe, and the mysterious stronghold of the robbers, which was named Dumbourtine Castle, and the young engineer who solved the mystery of the castle, thereby winning much honor and a wife.

Those were the good stories, rather imaginative and far-fetched, but strong in that very fact, as they were convincing and real in their originality.

I will wager that some of the ones named will puzzle even the editorial department to recall, to say nothing of the "old reader."

O. M. EDWARDS.

COMPELLED TO BE GOOD IF THEY WRITE FOR THE ARGOSY

Persons that want to read themselves to sleep are warned away from THE ARGOSY. Note the experience of Miss Schumann as detailed below.

Salisbury, North Carolina.

I just can't help writing a few words after reading the Log-Book. I can hardly wait to get THE ARGOSY. I have access to several magazines, but there's nothing that equals THE ARGOSY. I read everything in it, but I must admit that I am partial to William Wallace Cook. His story, "Over a Cliff at Point Firmin," kept me from sleeping until I read it through. It was *extra*. But they're all compelled to be good writers if they write for THE ARGOSY. I'd like this to reach the Log-Book, for I want everybody to know how I love THE ARGOSY.

Yours for further success,

PAULINE LOUISE SCHUMANN.

LOG-BOOK JOTTINGS

George A. Cochran, Supply Troop, 13th Cavalry, Columbus, New Mexico, thinks "The Man Hunt on Capitol Hill" grand. John Busanovich, Kingston, Pennsylvania, enjoys THE ARGOSY very much, but thinks we have never printed a better story than "One-Cylinder Sam." This, by the way, is now in the movies, under the title, "The River of Romance." Charles Crandall, Fort Myers, Florida, has been a reader of THE ARGOSY for over thirty years, and up to January, 1914, had not missed over six copies in the last twenty years. But R. P. Olin, at another military-named place, Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, goes him one better in not having missed an issue from the time what he calls the best magazine published was started. George F. Gilmore, Lebanon, Kentucky, a reader for many years who does not want to miss a number, is informed that THE ARGOSY will soon print a corking story of Revolutionary times. G. O. Patton, Nixon, Texas, thinks the cowboy stories are the best, because he was raised in Texas and punched cattle all his life until ten years ago. I may tell Harrison J. Linderman, Glentana, Montana, who wants more stories by Edgar Franklin and E. J. Rath, that Franklin has just started work on a new one for us. George H. Hartley, Kilbourn, Wisconsin, in renewing his subscription, says that he has been reading THE ARGOSY every month for six years, and that the stories are all O. K. E. L. Howard, Douglas, North Dakota, has been a reader of THE ARGOSY for some time, and writes that he would not go without it, as it is worth many times the price.

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Xmas Subscription Department

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8 West Fortieth Street, New York

Statement of the ownership, management, etc., of THE ARGOSY, published monthly at New York, N. Y., for October 1st, 1916. Required by the Act of Congress of August 24th, 1912.

NOTE—This statement is to be made in duplicate, both copies to be delivered by the publisher to the Postmaster, who will send one copy to the Third Assistant Postmaster-General (Division of Classification), Washington, D. C., and retain the other in the files of the Post-Office.

State of NEW YORK }
County of NEW YORK } s.s. :

Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the State and County aforesaid, personally appeared WM. T. DEWART, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the General Manager of THE ARGOSY, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24th, 1912, embodied in Section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations. To wit:

That the names and addresses of the Publisher, Editor, Managing Editor, and General Manager are:

Publisher—THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 8 West 40th Street, New York, N. Y.

Editor—MATTHEW WHITE, JR., 8 West 40th Street, New York, N. Y.

Managing Editor—MATTHEW WHITE, JR., 8 West 40th Street, New York, N. Y.

General Manager—WM. T. DEWART, 8 West 40th Street, New York, N. Y.

That the Owners are: (If a corporation give its name and the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of stock.)

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FRANK A. MUNSEY, 8 West 40th Street, New York, N. Y.

That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders, owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are:

There are no bonds, mortgages, or other securities against THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY.

That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company, but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

WM. T. DEWART, General Manager.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 2d day of October, 1916.

A. V. KASS, Notary Public.
New York County, No. 238.
New York Register No. 8190.
Term expires March 30th, 1918.

{ SEAL }

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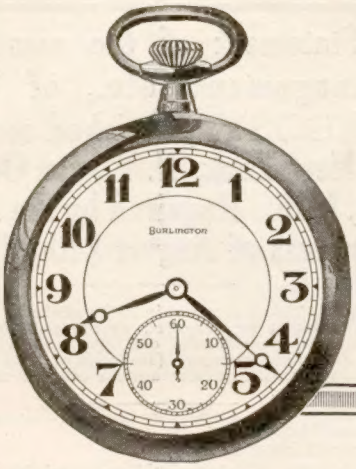

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